

EXAMINING SCHOOL BOARD MEMBERS' EXPECTATIONS FOR DISTRICT  
SUPERINTENDENTS USING THE IOWA STANDARDS FOR SCHOOL LEADERS

by

David E. (Ed) Klamfoth

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Dissertation Committee:  
Robyn Cooper, Ph.D., Chair  
Elaine Smith-Bright, Ed. D.  
Mary Delagardelle, Ph. D.

Dean of the School of Education:  
Janet M. McMahonill, Ph.D.

Drake University

Des Moines, Iowa

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I also wish to mention my mother, who we lost before I was able to complete my doctoral program. She always served as inspiration to me with all of my graduate work. It is my hope that she is looking down with pride.



## **ABSTRACT**

The relationship between a superintendent and the school board is a key element in determining the tenure of the superintendent (Barth, 2003; Hoyle, English, & Steffy, 1998; Glass & Franceschini, 2007; Hess, 2002; Mountford, 2008), and superintendent tenure often determines the ability of school districts to make necessary improvements (Caplan, 2010; Myers, 2011; Waters & Marzano, 2006). Tenure is often determined by the expectations that school boards have for their superintendents, with new hires often surprised by those after they are given the job.

The purpose of this study was to determine if the expectations of board members could be predicted based upon certain characteristics of age, sex, level of education, years of service on the board, and district enrollment. Hierarchical regression analysis indicates that female school board members place greater importance on the standard shared vision than male board members. Additionally, age was a positive predictor for the importance placed upon the standard family and community, while years of service on the board was a negative predictor for the importance placed on family and community. Qualitative responses indicate that school board members strongly favor superintendents with high integrity, ranking the standard on ethics as the most important standard. Recommendations for practice are provided for superintendents, school board members, professional organizations, and preparatory programs.

## **CHAPTER 1**

### **INTRODUCTION**

When it comes to improving schools, superintendents matter (Caplan, 2010; Myers, 2011; Waters & Marzano, 2006). And in this age of ever-increasing demands and expectations placed upon school districts, boards of education must do all they can to find ways to ensure all students learn at high levels. This includes finding the right superintendent. However, finding the right person who is going to meet the long-term needs of the district, and vice versa, is neither a simple undertaking, nor one that should be taken lightly (Hoadley, 2003; Kowalski, McCord, Petersen, Young, & Ellerson, 2011). As Land (2002) put it, “Some school board experts consider a board’s most important responsibility to be hiring a superintendent” (p. 22).

Getting that person to commit to a district is just the first step. Keeping them long enough to realize their potential impact is also key. An important aspect to a superintendent’s longevity is the relationship developed between the superintendent and the members of the school board (Barth, 2003; Hoyle, English, & Steffy, 1998; Glass & Franceschini, 2007; Hess, 2002; Kowalski, et al., 2011; Mountford, 2008). In addition to trust, relationships are built upon open communication and a clear set of expectations. However, superintendents often enter into new school districts with some uncertainty of what their new employer, the school board, expects from them. With each school board being comprised of very unique individuals, what one board may want, need, or expect most from their superintendent may be quite different than what is expected from neighboring districts’ school boards. This lack of clarity can have a negative impact from the outset on the relationship between the school board and the superintendent and, consequently, on the tenure of the superintendent.

Numerous studies have confirmed that a positive relationship between the board and the superintendent is necessary for a district to move forward (Alsbury, 2003; Chance, 1992; Dervarics & O'Brien, 2011; Petersen & Fusarelli, 2001; Resnick & Bryant, 2010). A key to ensuring a good relationship is to be intentional with expectations when hiring a new superintendent. Hiring a district superintendent is one of the most significant functions of school boards (Hoadley, 2003; Kowalski, et al., 2011; Land, 2002; Patrick, 2006). The person hired must possess the skills "particularly suited to the unique characteristics of the district and community" (Patrick, 2006, p. 2). In other words, it must be someone with whom the school board feels comfortable, and someone who understands the expectations of the board and the district as a whole. The challenge, however, is in ensuring that the candidates interviewing are clear about the issues a district faces, the expectations of the school board, and what the school board's agenda might be in moving forward. One might assume that expectations would be clearly laid out in the interview process, but that is not always the case, leaving some superintendents to try to make the determination themselves (Patrick, 2006). This has the potential to undermine the relationship from the beginning.

Finding the right superintendent to lead a school district is imperative to having a leader who possesses the skills and attributes necessary to take on the needs of the district and meet the expectations of the school board. Finding the right person for the job means that the superintendent candidate feels that the school board's expectations are reasonable and a good fit with the candidate's skills and professional background. The challenge, however, is that the expectations individual school board members (or entire boards) have will vary from district to district, making it difficult for superintendent candidates and school boards of education to have a clear understanding of what each should expect of the other.

There are over 90,000 school board members currently serving nationwide, and 1,976 in the state of Iowa (Dervarics & O'Brien, 2011; Iowa Association of School Boards, 2012). Given the sheer numbers, it would seem that the expectations and perceptions school board members have for their superintendent will vary based on the composition of the board. If the variation is extensive, it can be problematic in that prospective superintendent candidates may not be a good fit for the district, thus entering into a situation that does not suit them or the district. As superintendents move from one district to another, or move into the position from another administrative role, they come with a belief that they know what is expected of them based on those prior experiences with different school boards. Superintendent candidates would have also developed a belief about job expectations from coursework taken in route to their endorsement. When school boards' expectations are disparate from one another and not made explicit from the outset, superintendent candidates are left to guess, or ascertain during an interview what might be expected of them. This could create a potential mismatch right from the outset. Perhaps Lashway (2002) put it best.

School boards should work closely with superintendents to clarify their expectations for performance and evaluation. Without strong and highly visible board support, district administrators will be preoccupied with shoring up their political base and thus unlikely to take the bold steps needed for transforming schools. p. 5

The state of Iowa has attempted to clarify the expectations school board members should have for their superintendents by adopting the Iowa Standards for School Leaders (ISSL). It is against these six standards and associated criteria that school boards are to evaluate their superintendents. The extent to which school boards use these standards in superintendent selection and performance evaluations has not been researched. Likewise, there is no research to

date that focuses on the importance of these standards to school boards. See Appendix A for a full list of the ISSL standards.

### **Statement of the Problem**

Since superintendent tenure is an important consideration in improving schools, it is critical that districts hold on to those they hire long enough to realize a positive impact. That is, of course, true for those superintendents who can make a positive difference for a school district, and ones who meet the expectations that a school board have for them. A key piece to ensuring superintendent longevity is the development of a good relationship that is based upon clear expectations. When a vacancy occurs, school boards screen and interview candidates, and they hire the individual who they think would best serve the needs of their district. It is a greater challenge, however, for the candidates to vet the school board in order to clearly determine and understand the expectations the school board has for their new chief administrator.

The reasons superintendents leave are varied, including the stressful nature and increased accountability of the job, long hours, and more money elsewhere (Glass, 2001; Lowery, Harris, Hopson, & Marshall, 2001). In addition, school board and superintendent relationships are cited often as a key to keeping a superintendent in a district, as well as a major reason for superintendents leaving (Glass, 2001; Land, 2002; Natkin, Cooper, Alborano, Padilla, & Ghosh, 2002; Thomas, 2001). One of the many keys to a solid, successful working relationship is for both sides to clearly and explicitly understand what the other expects of them. In the case of superintendents and school boards this is not always made explicit until after a new superintendent has signed a contract and assumed her or his duties. This may be too late.

Although there is considerable research to be found in regards to the nature and importance of school board and superintendent relations, none could be found that attempts to

determine if certain characteristics of individual school board members play a role in the expectations they have for their superintendent. If information like this were to be made available, a superintendent candidate or new hire, equipped with some basic data about a school board, could have a better idea of the school board's expectations going into an interview and/or a new job. This information could help prospective superintendents better determine if the school board's expectations fit with their particular skills. Superintendents might believe that if they can perform the duties identified in the ISSL, that they will satisfy any school board. However, that may not be what school boards are looking for as school boards may emphasize some of the ISSL constructs more than others. Knowing where the emphasis lies may be helpful information to superintendent candidates or newly hired superintendents.

### **Purpose Statement**

The purpose of this study was to examine the expectations school board members have for superintendents as related to the ISSL.

### **Research Questions**

The research questions for this study are as follows:

1. What is the demographic make-up of school board members in the state of Iowa?
2. What is the relationship between school board members' age, length of service on the board, and student enrollment of the district they serve, and the level of importance placed on the six Iowa Standards for School Leaders?
3. Is there a statistically significant difference between a school board members' sex and highest level of education acquired and the level of importance placed on the six Iowa Standards for School Leaders?
4. To what extent does a school board members' age, sex, length of service on the board,

and level of education, predict the level of importance placed on a) Standard 1 of the ISSL, *shared vision*, b) Standard 2 the ISSL, *culture of learning*, c) Standard 3 of the ISSL, *management*, d) Standard 4 of the ISSL construct, *family and community*, e) Standard 5 of the ISSL construct, *ethics*, and f) Standard 6 of the ISSL construct, *societal context*?

5. How do school board members rank the ISSL standards relative to the most important characteristics for their district's superintendent?
6. What do school board members identify as the most important attributes of a superintendent?
7. What do school board members identify as the most important responsibilities for their district superintendent?
8. What do school board members identify as their top three expectations for their district superintendent?

### **Significance of the Study**

This study has the potential to benefit both local school boards of education and superintendents. In addition, organizations such as the Iowa Association of School Boards (IASB), the National School Boards Association (NSBA), School Administrators of Iowa (SAI), the American Association of School Administrators (AASA) and the superintendent preparatory programs can all benefit.

Local school boards can use the results of this study to determine how the composition of their school board prioritizes the ISSL and compares with those of other boards. If it is found that there is a relationship between the characteristics of the members of the school board and differing levels of importance to the ISSL, this could provide information to boards that allow

them to identify candidates whose skills may be a better match for the expectations they have to the ISSL. This, in turn, may provide for an optimal working relationship between superintendent and school board and could impact superintendent longevity. Finally, it may provide them with an opportunity to evaluate whether their ideals for a superintendent are consistent with the research used to develop the ISSL.

In a similar way, state and national school board associations such as IASB and NSBA could benefit. As groups that help local school boards with their mission, these organizations serve as a conduit of information. As such, they can take what has been learned from this study and disseminate the information to their members. Also, since these groups provide training to local school boards, they might take what knowledge is gained and incorporate it into their professional development offerings.

For superintendents these findings can be perhaps the most beneficial. Superintendents may have their own ideas about what a school board will expect from them, but those may be quite different from the actual expectations of the school board whether implicit or explicit. They may believe, for example, that all school boards place an equal amount of emphasis on each of the ISSL, when in fact that may not be the case. If it is found that boards' expectations vary by district, and a relationship exists between the level of importance placed on various ISSL and school board members' demographic information, then potential superintendent candidates can enter with a much clearer picture of a particular board's expectations around those standards. This has the potential to enhance the likelihood that the superintendent would be a good fit for a district, and therefore increase the possibility that their tenure with the district would be sufficient to impact positive change, growth, or continued success.



For the administrators' organizations such as SAI and AASA, the benefits are much like those for the school board organizations. Through trainings, professional development, and publications the information can be shared with those aspiring to become superintendents, as well as to those who may be looking to move to another district.

Finally, this can be significant for the programs that are given the charge of training and preparing would-be superintendents. A key element in many preparatory programs is to prepare these individuals for what will be expected of them based upon, among other things, the ISSL. Although candidates will have been exposed to some of that as they worked through the ranks in school districts, their view may be somewhat limited considering that some would have had experiences in very few districts. Therefore, if these findings can be made a part of a preparatory program, it has the potential to help these would-be superintendents better evaluate the places they wish to work, and whether or not they would be a good match with a given district.

### **Theoretical Framework**

The framework of this study was based upon the person-organization (P-O) fit theory, as defined by Kristof (1996). Kristof's (1996) definition states "P-O fit is defined as the compatibility between people and organizations that occurs when (a) at least one entity provides what the other needs, or (b) they share similar fundamental characteristics, or (c) both" (pp. 4-5). She goes on to say that although this can be unilateral (just one entity provides for the needs of the other) the optimum situation is when each entity fills the other's needs *and* they share the same fundamental characteristics. Certainly a key element to a successful relationship between school boards and their superintendents is that there is compatibility between the two.

Kristof (1996) explains that there is both supplementary and complementary fit between an individual (person) and an organization. She differentiates the two based upon what each can provide for the other. Figure 1 identifies those elements that each side offers the other.

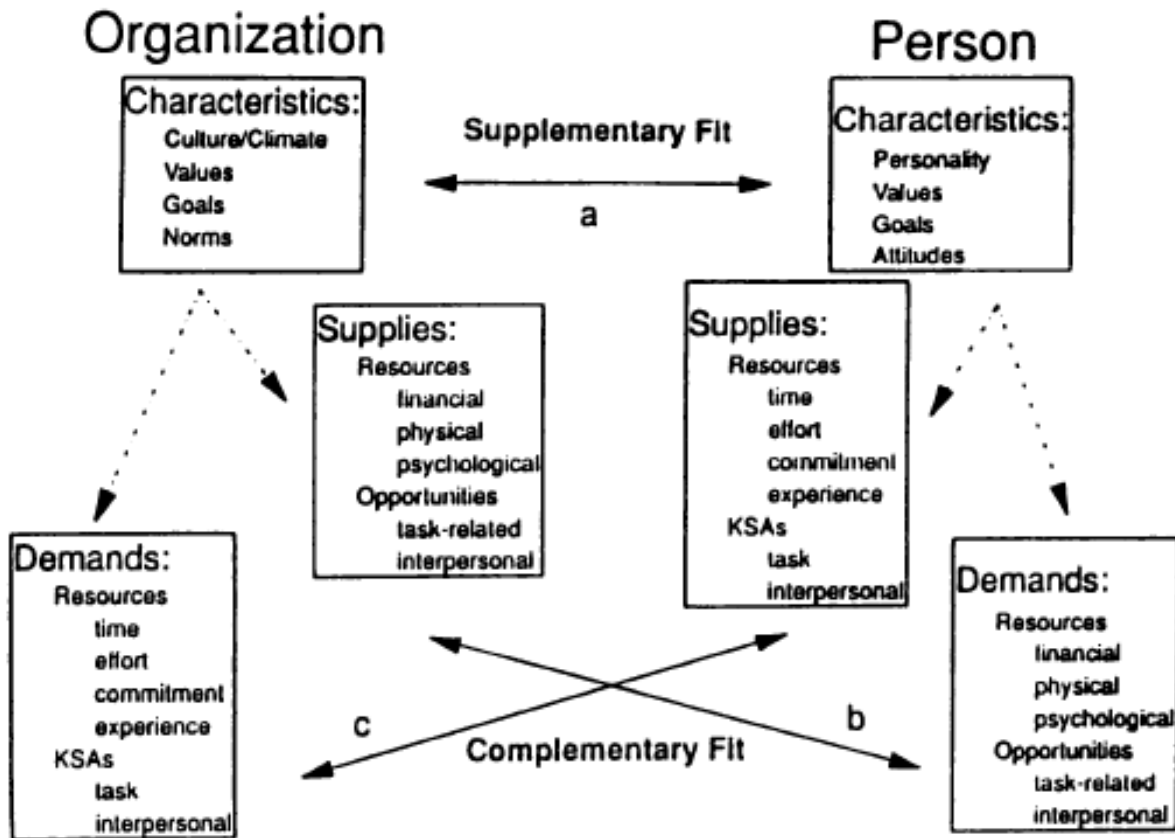


Figure 1.1 Person-Organization Fit Diagram

Kristof (1996, p.4)

### Supplementary Fit

Supplementary fit is about the alignment of fundamental characteristics of a person and a selected organization. For the individual those characteristics include personality, values, goals, and attitudes, and for the organization they are culture and climate, values, goals, and norms. It is when there are similarities between the person and the organization on these characteristics that supplementary fit exists (Kristof, 1996; Muchinsky & Monahan, 1987).

For the purpose of this study the school district and school board would be considered the organization. Therefore, the supplementary fit items they bring are the values, goals, and norms that are part of the district culture, but also what each member brings individually. Likewise, the superintendent would be the person, bringing her or his own set of values, goals and attitudes.

Four of the six ISSL can be considered to be elements of supplementary fit.

- Standard 1: An educational leader [superintendent] promotes the success of all students by facilitating the development, articulation, implementation, and stewardship of a vision of learning that is shared and supported by the school community.
- Standard 2: An educational leader [superintendent] promotes the success of all students by advocating, nurturing and sustaining a school culture and instructional program conducive to student learning and staff professional development.
- Standard 5: An educational leader [superintendent] promotes the success of all students by acting with integrity, fairness and in an ethical manner.
- Standard 6: An educational leader [superintendent] promotes the success of all students by understanding the profile of the community, and responding to and influencing the larger political, economic, legal and cultural context.

Although an argument can be made for adding the other two standards to this list, or for placing any one of the four listed here into the complementary fit side of the equation, this placement makes sense to this researcher. Supplementary fit is focused on the values, goals, culture and norms of a district, and for the values, goals, attitudes and personality of a superintendent. These four each address elements of culture and values and can therefore be considered elements of supplementary fit.

## **Complementary Fit**

Complementary fit is when there is a match between a person's talents and the corresponding needs of the organization (Muchinsky & Monahan, 1987). Kristof (1996) defines the elements of complementary fit as demands and supplies. That is, if the demands the organization might place upon an individual such as time, effort, commitment, experience, and other knowledge and skills, match up with what the individual can supply (provide), complimentary fit exists. Likewise, if the person's financial, physical, psychological, and interpersonal needs are met by the organization, there is a complementary fit.

Again, for this study the organizational side of complementary fit would be things such as the commitment the board is expecting from their superintendent, what experiences are they looking for, and what knowledge and skills they want their chief administrator to provide in exchange for compensation. The superintendent, then, would provide the time, skills, and energies to do the job, while expecting fair treatment and adequate compensation in return.

Standards 3 and 4 can be considered elements of complementary fit.

- Standard 3: An educational leader [superintendent] promotes the success of all students by ensuring management of the organization, operations and resources for a safe, efficient and effective learning environment.
- Standard 4: An educational leader [superintendent] promotes the success of all students by collaborating with families and community members, responding to diverse community interests and needs and mobilizing community resources.

These two standards are more about the “doing” part of the job, and less about the value aspect. Complementary fit is about the resources and tasks associated with the position, making these two standards align with the complementary fit description.

It is important to have both supplementary and complementary fit between a school board and a superintendent. Having goals and values (supplementary fit) that align are important, if not necessary, for a good working relationship between the school board and superintendent. The complementary elements (i.e. time, knowledge, experience, skills, and tasks) are also valuable, but are not as effective if the supplemental fit is absent. Ideally, we have both. Helping superintendent candidates to identify the expectations of boards can help them better ascertain the degree to which they fit with a school district, and how well that district fits with them. Davis-Blake and Pfeffer (1989) observed that similar jobs in different organizations may vary a great deal, and they concluded that the “measurement of job characteristics requires moving beyond crude occupational surrogates to measures which actually reflect the characteristics of a particular job as it is structured in a particular organizational setting” (p. 394). This applies to superintendents across the country. Despite the fact that the title of the job is the same, and some of the functions are quite similar, the expectations are different based upon the wants and needs of a school board and the community they represent (Alsbury, 2003). Helping both groups determine the proper fit is important.

In conducting a quantitative meta-analysis of research conducted on fit, Kristof-Brown, Zimmerman, and Brown (2005) state, “We present conclusive evidence that fit matters to applicants, recruiters, and employees” (p. 325). This is true of superintendents, those who recruit them, and those who employ and work with them. This study attempts to provide information that will help determine the level of fit between what school board members expect, and the ISSL with which superintendent performance is to be evaluated. In addition, determining whether boards of education are more interested in supplementary or complementary fit with their superintendent.

## **Definitions of Key Terms and Acronyms**

This section provides definitions of key terms and acronyms used in this paper.

*AASA*—American Association of School Administrators

*IASB*—Iowa Association of School Boards

*ISLLC*—Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium

*ISSL*—The Iowa Standards for School Leaders

*NSBA*—National School Boards Association

*Person-Organization (P-O) fit*—The compatibility between an individual (superintendent) and an organization (school district) that occurs when their characteristics match.

*SAI*—School Administrators of Iowa

*School board*—A group of citizens, usually five or seven, elected from within the boundaries of a school district for the purpose of providing oversight on all functions of a school district.

*Standards*—The expected behaviors and/or tasks to be performed by a superintendent.

*Tenure*—The number of continuous years of service by a superintendent in a school district.

*Years of service*—The number of years a school board member has served on the board

## **Summary**

This study sought to inform school board members, superintendents, state and national professional organizations that represent boards and superintendents, and superintendent preparatory programs by identifying the demographic make-up of Iowa school board members and the associated expectations they have for superintendents. More specifically, this study sought to determine if school board members' demographic make-up could predict the expectations they would have for their superintendent, as related to the ISSL.

Chapter 2 provides a summary of the related research and literature that provide the background and foundation for this study.

Chapter 3 describes the quantitative methodology used in the study, participant demographics, variables and instrumentation, data analyses, delimitations, and limitations.

Chapter 4 shares the results of the study, including data screening, descriptive statistics, correlations, t-tests, and ANOVA, and multiple regression. Also included is the ranking of the ISSL, the qualitative responses, and answers to the research questions.

Chapter 5 includes a summary of the study, a discussion of the results, conclusion, and final thoughts.

## **CHAPTER 2**

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

This review of literature will focus on four primary areas. First will be a review of school boards, including their history, composition, and purpose. Second will be a look at superintendents, including the significance of their relationship with school boards, and tenure. Next will be a review of the ISSL, looking into their development and use. The final section will be a review of P-O Fit theory and how it serves as a framework for this study.

#### **School Boards**

School boards in the state of Iowa are comprised of five or seven elected members of the school community. All elected members serve a four-year term without remuneration (Iowa Association of School Boards, 2012). At the start of the 2010-11 school year there were 1,976 individuals serving as school board members in Iowa's 359 public K-12 schools. Among those serving, two-thirds were men (IASB, 2012). Despite the fact that there are slight differences in how they are selected and in the number of members, every state in the country has school boards that serve similar purposes. The one possible exception might be in the state of Hawaii, where there is only a single statewide school district, which is overseen by the state board of education.

#### **History of School Boards**

American school boards can trace their roots all the way back to the mid 1600s, when the Massachusetts Bay Colony mandated that every town have a public school, and committees were appointed to run them (Toch, 2011). Through the years it became common practice to have locally elected officials, known as selectmen, take on the responsibility of overseeing school operations, but they discovered that their other responsibilities did not allow for enough time to



do what was necessary for the schools. As a result, they appointed school board members to perform those duties (Delagardelle, 2006; Land, 2002). These school committees, and then boards, were appointed to make important decisions for the local schools (Education Writers Association, 2003).

Over time it became apparent that these local school boards were getting caught up in corrupt ward politics. In these early years each school had its own board, meaning that there would be dozens of school boards in each of the larger cities (Delagardelle, 2006). The citizenry did not want their school boards to be subject to local politics, so in the early 1900s there was a move to have one centralized school board, representing the entire community; a model adopted from corporate boards (Danzberger, 1992; Land, 2002). This move from small, locally elected boards on a partisan basis to a more centralized board elected on a city-wide, non-partisan basis was a significant shift in school board governance (Delagardelle, 2006).

As the country entered the 20<sup>th</sup> century there began to take shape another significant change—the role of the superintendent. Superintendents had been employed in the 1800s, but their role was primarily instructional, in addition to serving as a clerk for the school board. But that changed in the early 1900s when boards began looking to broaden the scope of the duties of the superintendent. Formal advanced training became required as these new duties were assigned. This transformation in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century is very much like what is in place still today. Land (2002) says,

Researchers have described the shift to a smaller, centralized, policy-making lay school board with a professional superintendent as its chief executive officer and selection of board members through city-wide (or district-wide as the reform spread from the cities to the rural areas) elections as the last major reform of school boards. (p. 2)

For the next 50-plus years local school boards were given almost complete autonomy to run their schools as they saw fit. There was skepticism of both state and federal elected officials, so the local communities appreciated that isolation. It wasn't until the 1950s and the *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka* ruling that the federal government began to take an active role in public education in order to oversee desegregation. This was followed just over a decade later with the passage of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965. With this act, "federal and state authorities began to impinge on the influence of the local school boards, and then only modestly" (Toch, 2011, p. 44). This included a study of the impact of federal dollars now going into public schools for specific programs, as well as the first federally funded look at student performance in 1969 (Toch, 2011). This shift also began to show itself at the state level, as state governments began to require that tests be given to students to ensure that they were meeting minimum competencies in the core subject areas.

By the late 1980s, large percentages of students across the country continued to perform at low levels. This resulted in greater pressure being applied from both federal and state governments on local districts, and reduced local control was, and has been, the result (Land, 2002). This campaign for greater accountability culminated with President George W. Bush's No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (Toch, 2011). This push from above for high academic standards and accountability have been met with some resistance at the local level, but there is no sign of it changing any time soon.

### **Composition of School Boards**

Nationwide there are over 90,000 school board members serving their districts (Dervarics & O'Brien, 2011). In Iowa, there are 1976 school board members (IASB, 2012). According to a National Association of School Boards (NSBA) (2011) survey, those members represent a broad

spectrum of the population. School boards are comprised of men and women from all walks of life. There are, however, some differences in the composition of Iowa school boards from the nation as a whole. It is worth noting that this survey data used for national statistics was only sent to school board members who served districts that had at least 1000 students. In electing to do so, they effectively eliminated many districts (and therefore school board members) throughout the country, which would potentially impact the true demographics of school board members across our country. For Iowa, the demographic data available are somewhat limited. Likewise, the research on each of the demographic characteristics for school board members that follow is limited and somewhat dated.

Iowa school boards consist of either five (about 70% of districts) or seven members, depending on the system locally adopted (Iowa Association of School Boards, 2012). Members serve four-year terms. School board members are elected from director districts or at-large within a school district's boundaries. Some districts have a combination of the two methods in place. This, too, is a local decision. While a few school board members in the nation receive some remuneration for their service, board members in Iowa receive no pay.

**Gender.** Among the members who completed a survey in 2010, NSBA found that 56% of the school board members were male. In Iowa the ratio of men to women is higher than that of the nation, with two-thirds of Iowa board members being men (IASB, 2012), while making up just 49.1% of the Iowa population (United States Census Bureau, 2012).

There have been some limited studies on this topic as it relates to school board members, with some interesting findings. Ortiz and Marshall (1988) and Underwood, Alvey, and Fortune (1987) found that female board members pay more attention to the educational components of school than male board members. Tallerico (1992) confers, and tells us that women board

members devote more time to school board work and that they are more interested than their male counterparts in “curriculum, programs, and classrooms than finance, facilities, or athletics” (p. 384). In a similar statement, Shakeshaft (1988) states, “Men board members leave the educational decisions to the administrators, but gauge a superintendent’s effectiveness by how efficient she or he is administratively. Women, on the other hand, emphasize superintendent and board evaluations focused on educational content” (p. 413).

The research cited above implies that male school board members are more concerned about the management aspect of the job, while female board members are more concerned about the educational leadership aspect. Using Kristof’s (1996) person-organization fit diagram (Figure 1.1) this research would support the idea that women tend to the supplementary fit elements, while men favor complementary fit elements. Likewise, if these findings are true in Iowa, female board members might tend to have greater expectations for their superintendent around standard 2 (a culture of learning), while male board members may tend to favor standard 3 (management).

**Age.** Of those responding to the national survey of school board members, 60% were between the ages of 40 and 59, with just 4.6% under 40 and 34% 60 and above (NSBA, 2011). In Iowa, no data could be found that provides insight into the ages of school board members. According to United States Census Bureau (2012) the plurality of the population (15.2%) in Iowa falls between the ages of 35 and 44, followed by the 45-54 year age range (13.4%), then 25-34 years (12.4%). Given that an individual must be at least 18 years old to be on the school board, and a plurality of the populous falls in the ranges described, one could assume that the makeup of Iowa school boards would be somewhat reflective of the overall numbers.

**Educational Attainment.** Members of school boards are more educated than the general population, with over 74% nationally having at least a bachelor’s degree (NSBA, 2011),

compared with 27.9% (United States Census Bureau, 2012) nationwide. The most common career background was education at just over 27% of board members falling into this category, with business and commerce following at 18.1%. Over one-quarter of the members are retired. As a result of the higher levels of education, it is not surprising to know that over 90% of the national school board members surveyed had household incomes that exceeded \$50,000, and 48.4% over \$100,000 (NSBA, 2011). In Iowa 24.5% of the total population has a bachelor's degree or higher. Again, data of this nature exclusively for school board members was not found.

**Years of Service on the School Board.** Over 50% of the school board members have served for more than five years in their current district (NSBA, 2011). In Iowa, 60% have done so for less than five years. One-quarter of the current members have been in place for between five and nine years, while 10% have served from ten to fourteen, 4% from 15-19 years, and just one percent serving 20 years or more (Iowa Association of School Boards, 2012).

### **Roles and Responsibilities of School Boards**

Schools boards, as we know them in Iowa, are elected bodies, representing their constituents for the purpose of providing oversight of their local school district. School boards operate as a corporate body, meaning that members have no authority to act independently, and cannot make binding commitments or decisions on behalf of the board as a whole. What powers and responsibilities a school board possesses must be carried out by the board as a whole (Iowa Association of School Boards, 2011).

Despite the infringement on local school boards' powers by both state and federal governments, there are still a considerable number of important decisions that are made locally. Roles and responsibilities of school boards differ from state to state, and there is often some

variation from district to district. There are, however, some commonalities. Land's (2002) review of the research indicates that boards have come to assume the following responsibilities:

- Providing for quality leadership of the district.
- Developing positive relationships.
- Making policy and budget decisions that support district needs.
- Engaging in ongoing evaluation of administration.
- Taking part in board training and professional development.

Under Iowa law the local school board has the authority to do many things. Among those include employing necessary personnel, developing and adopting board policies to govern the operation of the district, and determining the major educational needs of the district and adopting goals to address those needs (Iowa Association of School Boards, 2011). These are all key responsibilities, with the hiring of personnel—most notably the superintendent—most often cited as the most important function of a school board (Goodman, Fulbright, & Zimmerman, 1997; Hess & Meeks, 2010; Hoadley, 2003; Institute of Educational Leadership, 2001; Land, 2002; Patrick, 2006).

As noted earlier, the state and federal governments have taken on a more active role in public schools over the last couple of decades. Among other things, this has resulted in another very important function for school boards, and that is overseeing and monitoring improvement in student achievement. (Dervarics & O'Brien, 2011; Glass, 2000; Hess, 2002; Resnick & Bryant, 2010). Schools, rightly so, are accountable to their public for the achievement of students. With the rules in place associated with No Child Left Behind, schools face sanctions for not meeting growth targets for all students. There is a significant amount of pressure applied to school districts to have all students perform at high levels that was not in place a generation ago. This

has caused school boards, and educational researchers, to look closely at the role they play with regards to student achievement. What has been discovered is that there are ways in which school boards can have a positive impact on student outcomes.

A survey conducted in 1997-98 by the American School Board Journal (1998) (cited in Lane, 2008) found that boards were, indeed, indicating that student achievement was their primary concern. It also found that those boards recognized ways in which they could address that issue, including the following: (a) having a focus on student achievement and how policies were aligned to that goal, (b) creating an environment that allowed for a trusting and collaborative relationship between the board and the superintendent, (c) ensuring that conditions existed that allowed the superintendent to function as an instructional leader, and (d) effective and open communication between the board president and superintendent and board members. What stands out in these results is that three of the four are directly related to the superintendent and how they interact with the board, and vice versa. Research supports the findings of this survey (Alsbury, 2003; Glenn, 2008; Hess, 2002; Hoyle, et al., 1998; Ramirez & Guzman, 2003). Therefore, hiring, supporting, and retaining the right person to fill the role of superintendent is of utmost importance (Caplan, 2010; Hoadley, 2003; Land, 2002; Myers, 2011; Pascopella, 2011).

### **Superintendents**

As noted, a little over 100 years ago the role of superintendents changed from primarily a clerk for the board who happened to be involved considerably in the day-to-day instructional activities, to one that looked much more like a corporate chief executive officer of the board (Land, 2002). That sort of arrangement persisted into the 21<sup>st</sup> century, with some slight changes beginning to take place over the last 20 or so years. Most notably, superintendents are now looked upon much more as an instructional leader, responsible for the academic achievement of

the students in the district (Lane, 2008; Lowery, et al., 2001; Mountford, 2008). The research indicates that to play this role effectively, the relationship between the school board and the superintendent is key (Kowalski, et al., 2011; Land, 2002; Lane, 2008; Petersen & Fusarelli, 2001). A positive working relationship allows the superintendent to take the necessary risks associated with moving a district forward, and affords them the time with which to implement the changes.

### **The Board/Superintendent Relationship**

The superintendent serves at the pleasure of the school board. As a result, it is necessary that the relationship between the superintendent and members of the school board is a positive one. According to Fusarelli (2006), “Research on superintendents and school boards finds that the district leaders’ success in managing and implementing change is dependent on the relationships they have established with their school board” (p.52). Others who have studied and researched the topic confirm this. According to Land (2002), a trusting, collaborative relationship between the school board and superintendent is a key element of quality governance for boards. In writing of the relationship between school boards and superintendents Glass and Franceschini (2007) note, “If harmonious [the relationship], more energy is usually focused on building programs rather than defending present programs and practices” (p. 16). A sound relationship allows for the superintendent to feel comfortable and confident in making recommendations they feel are necessary for improving their district.

Going beyond simply identifying the fact that relationships between school board members and superintendents are important in terms of “building programs,” researchers have identified factors that lead to positive relationships. Kowalski et al. (2011) found that superintendents identified “effective communicator” as the area where boards place the greatest



emphasis, especially as it pertains to superintendents communicating with the school board. Others concur that both school board members and superintendents identify communication between the two as a key element to a good working relationship (Cataldo, 2011; Glenn, 2008; Goodman, et al., 1997; Hoyle, et al., 1998; Land, 2002; Patrick, 2006; Thomas, 2001).

Other key factors that influence a superintendents' relationship with the school board include the superintendent's ability to manage daily functions (Chance & Capps, 1992; Glass & Franceschini, 2007; Lane, 2008), and possessing sound character and ethics (Cataldo, 2011; Glenn, 2008). Sound fiscal management, attention to turning in reports on time, seeing that staff are working as the contract requires, implementing board policy, and not being the subject of community gossip help superintendents to maintain a positive relationship with their board.

### **School Board Expectations for Superintendents**

When conducting research on superintendents being removed from their position, Yock, Keough, Underwood, and Fortune (1990) state that the top three reasons were: 1) a loss of confidence in the superintendent's integrity, 2) a loss of confidence in a superintendent's general leadership, and 3) evidence of mismanagement of finances. A more recent study by Hess (2002) asked school board members from 785 districts what they focus on most when evaluating their superintendents. The three most critical responses with a rating of "very important" were: 1) the board-superintendent relationship, 2) the morale of the school system employees, and 3) the safety of the district's students. Glass and Franceschini (2007) identified mismanagement of the budget, finances, and operations as the three highest priorities. In still another study, Lane (2008) found that school board members' perceptions of their superintendent had a great deal to do with the "superintendent's ability to inform faculty and staff about their duties and responsibilities,

specify the rules and policies that must be observed, and let employees know what is expected of them” (p. 114).

Interestingly absent from this list of what gets superintendents removed from office is student achievement, and how that impacts the relationship between a school board and the superintendent. Both identify student achievement as a major concern and source of pressure and stress (Dervarics & O'Brien, 2011; Land, 2002; Resnick & Bryant, 2010; Sutton, et al., 2008), but research does not seem to indicate that boards remove their superintendents for that reason alone.

### **Superintendent Tenure**

Just as certain attributes and characteristics of superintendents have been determined to be important in this regard, tenure has been linked to increases in student achievement (Dervarics & O'Brien, 2011; National School Boards Association, 2002; Pascopella, 2011; Waters & Marzano, 2006). Given the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) legislation and the associated increased accountability that schools face in regards to student achievement (Dervarics & O'Brien, 2011; Hess, 2002; Cataldo, 2011) and the link between superintendent tenure and increases in student achievement, identifying strategies that ensure superintendent longevity in a district is critical. Top administrators need time to evaluate the situation in a new district so they can make informed decisions as to the direction needed. This does not happen without considerable work. Then, once a clear picture is in place, it takes even more time to move all the necessary pieces into place. Thomas (2001) stated, “While implementing reforms, superintendents must first build the capacity for change within a district. There are many obstacles that inhibit efforts to influence district reforms and improvements” (p. 6). School

systems do not move quickly, and once they do there is much work in maintaining the momentum.

Research has shown that superintendent tenure varies based on the size of the districts and the time period in which the study was conducted (Council of Urban Boards of Education, 2002; Glass & Franceschini, 2007; Kowalski, et al. 2011; Pascopella, 2011; Thomas, 2001). For example, in 1999 the average tenure for superintendents was 6.2 years, but only 2.5 years for urban superintendents (Thomas, 2001). In 2007 Glass and Franceschini (2007) reported that the average nationwide tenure for superintendents was 5.7 years. By 2010, the tenure for urban superintendents increased to 3.6 years (Council of Great City Schools, 2010). The Iowa Department of Education (2012) reports that the average tenure of superintendents in Iowa in the 2010-11 school year was 4 years in the same district, with nearly one in four (22.3%) in their first or second year with their district. True reform in school districts takes time. According to Chance and Capps (1992) superintendents need both the opportunity and the necessary time to carry out and accomplish the goals of the district. If the superintendency is a revolving door, each new person may bring in his or her own ideas on how best the district should operate, throwing everyone into a constant state of flux.

Superintendent tenure is predicated on several things including, but not limited to, the political nature of the position, salary, necessary personal/family sacrifices, and relations with the district's board (Sutton, Jobe, McCord, Jordan, & Jordan, 2008). There are several studies that indicate the relationship with the board is a key component when considering a superintendent's tenure (Education Writers Association, 2003; Land, 2002; Laramore, 2010), and many that found tenure to be a factor in improving student achievement (Caplan, 2010; Myers, 2001; Thomas, 2001; Waters & Marzano, 2006). Therefore, school boards and superintendents

need to identify strategies to ensure superintendent longevity in the district. One such strategy is the development of a good working relationship between the school board and the superintendent.

The reasons why superintendents leave districts are varied. Sometimes the relationship between the school board and superintendent goes sour, resulting in the superintendent departing either voluntarily or involuntarily. Relationships can change as a result of turnover on the board, with new members having different values than those who they replaced. With new laws in place that limit school board elections to every other year, a majority of a board comes up for reelection every four years, having the potential to substantially alter the makeup of the board. They can also change as a result of egregious errors on the part of the superintendent. Or they might occur due to a miscalculation when the hire was made; either on the part of the board or of the superintendent who accepted the position. Certainly, a good number of superintendents move on simply to take another position, or to retire.

There are many things that contribute to a positive relationship between a school board and a superintendent. And there are also multiple reasons why a superintendent will be removed from office—each of which is related closely to what a school board expects from their chief executive. The problem is school boards do not do a good job of expressing those expectations to potential hires (Cataldo, 2011). And to complicate matters, what one district expects from their superintendent may be quite different than another. The make-up of a particular school board and the nature of the relationship they develop with their superintendent often determine the “perceived and real administrative roles. In large measure, this reality explains why the work of superintendents, even in neighboring school districts, may vary considerably” (Kowalski, et al., 2011, p. 6).

### **Iowa Standards for School Leaders**

In the state of Iowa superintendents are to be evaluated annually by their board of education. The Iowa Standards for School Leaders (ISSL) are the standards by which the superintendent's performance is to be evaluated. Although formally adopted by the Iowa Department of Education in 2007, their origin can be traced back to 1994 (Fisher, 2012).

### **Influence of the Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium (ISLLC) Standards**

The ISLLC was created in 1994 for the purpose of developing standards to guide the work of school administrators (Murphy, 2003), with the work being done through the Council of Chief State School Officers. A couple of key issues brought this work to light. First, there was a major void in the area (ISLLC, 1996). Up until that time, there simply had never been work done, on a national level, around the identification of standards by which school administrators ought to conduct their business. The second reason for their development was the fact that work on standards in other areas of educational reform, most notably with teaching standards, seemed to provide great leverage for reform (ISLLC, 1996).

In the actual development of the ISLLC standards, "a significant chunk is supported by the empirical findings from studies of effective schools and from the larger body of research on school improvement" (Murphy, 2009, p. 7). In addition, the ISLLC sought out trends in both education and society regarding emerging views of leadership (ISLLC, 1996). Together, the research and attention to emerging ideas provided the ISLLC standards with a strong, defensible base.

The work resulted in six standards, each of which is focused on teaching and learning, or the creation of environments that enhance teaching and learning. The focus placed upon the students is obvious, with each of the six standards beginning with the phrase, "A school

administrator is an educational leader who promotes the success of all students by....” The Council of Chief State School Officers formally adopted the standards developed by the ISLLC in 1996 (ISLLC, 1996). The ISLLC standards can be found in Appendix B.

### **History of the ISSL**

The process of drafting Iowa’s own version of leadership standards began in 2001 by the School Administrators of Iowa (SAI), with their bringing together large groups of superintendents to work in task forces and focus groups, with support and guidance coming from national experts such as David Livingstone and Joseph Murphy. In addition, the Wallace Foundation provided financial support for the work (Fisher, 2012). The group used the newly developed ISLLC standards for school leaders to guide their work. In actuality, the ISSL align very closely with the ISLLC standards.

The first draft of the ISSL was completed in early 2002, and it included not only standards, but also criteria to go along with each standard. The group then set out to develop descriptors for each of the 35 criteria. As Fisher (2012) put it, this was completely new work, with no guidance from any other organization. This part of the work was completed in 2003.

Since these standards and criteria would provide a basis upon which superintendents would be evaluated, it was deemed necessary to develop a model evaluation resource guide. This provided board members with templates to use in the process. To assist in this work the group included representatives from IASB, and vetted their work with a task force of school board members attending the IASB annual conference (Fisher, 2012).

In 2006 McREL released their work “School District Leadership that Works: The Effect of Superintendent Leadership on Student Achievement.” Once that happened, SAI and a team of superintendents cross-walked that research with leadership standards, criteria and descriptors

they had developed (Fisher, 2012). In 2006 nearly 100 superintendents worked on forming a final draft, which was then sent to Joseph Murphy at Vanderbilt University for review and input. The ISSL as we know them today were formally adopted by the Iowa State Board of Education in 2007 (Fisher, 2012).

**Standard One: Shared Vision.** The first of the ISSL states that an educational leader needs to facilitate the development and implementation of a vision for learning that is supported by the school community. Cranston (2002) stated that it is necessary for school leaders to play a significant role in the development of a vision when trying to lead change and improvement in a district. Firestone (2009) posits that a shared vision is necessary if a district wishes to move to a situation where their culture is one that is centered on student learning. This student learning focus is predicated, among other things, on a belief shared by the entire school community that all students can learn at high levels. Schools that have closed achievement gaps have more than a mission and vision posted on the wall. In other words, “They have a sense of mission” (Johnson & Uline, 2005, p. 46) rather than words on a page.

**Standard Two: Culture of Learning.** The second of the ISSL calls upon an educational leader to advocate, nurture, and sustain a culture in the school district that is conducive to both student and adult learning. Having a culture of learning includes many things, including a clear vision of the curriculum that is necessary, proper and ongoing data usage, and rigorous professional development for staff (Hoyle, English, & Steffy, 1998). Firestone (2009) identified a learning culture as necessary for schools to be successful in their mission.

Darish and Aplin (2001) point out that having a superintendent who understands how to manage is important. However, if school boards are serious about the real function of schools—educating our youth—then they must pay serious attention to the “instructional commitment and

expertise on the part of the district administrator” (Daresh & Aplin, 2001, p. 452). This culture of learning is important not just for the students, but for teachers and administrators as well.

**Standard Three: Management.** Standard three addresses the management aspects of the job. More specifically, it states that administrators must ensure the management of the organization, operations, and resources, for the purpose of providing an efficient and effective learning environment. It is an expectation that superintendents manage the district’s finances, personnel, and overall operations. In a study on board member’s perceptions of superintendents’ duties, Lane (2008) found that board members value highly a superintendent’s ability to manage the daily functions of the district. In addressing the function of management, Lane (2008) states:

The finding indicates that this item has a large effect on board members’ perceptions about the importance of a superintendent’s ability to inform faculty and staff about their duties and responsibilities, specify the rules and policies that must be observed, and let employees know what is expected of them. p. 114

Any organization that finds itself mired in financial difficulties, lacking in rules and policies that serve to promote the mission of the organization, and people to take care of those things will have trouble moving in the direction that is best for all constituents. This is no less true of schools.

A school district that is financially sound can often provide opportunities that districts with money issues cannot. And this makes a difference. Per-pupil spending has proven to be positively related to student achievement in reading and provides evidence that financial resources matter. (Archibald, 2006)

**Standard Four: Family and Community.** The focus of the fourth standard is centered upon the administrator’s ability and willingness to collaborate with families and community



members, responding to the unique and diverse interests and needs of their community and making the most of community resources. There is considerable variation in the population from one school district to another. This can be the result of different cultural identities, varying experiences, geography, income levels, and more. As a result, the needs and interests of the school community will vary. School leaders in schools that are identified as high performing understand the importance of connecting schools to parents, as well as possessing the expertise in how to make that happen (Murphy, Elliott, Goldring, & Porter, 2007). As a superintendent, Marks (2001) wrote, that the superintendent who considers the societal complexity of schools and communities will look at the diversity of the population served and will embrace it for the benefit of the entire school system.

**Standard Five: Ethics.** The fifth standard calls for educational leaders to promote student success by acting with integrity, fairness, and in an ethical manner. Despite the fact that this seems obvious, acting in this way is not without challenges. Cranston, Ehrich, and Kimber (2003) tell us that circumstances often place school leaders in ethical dilemmas as they deal with multiple constituencies and interests, in an environment calling for increased levels of accountability. Often leaders find themselves in situations where they intend to act fairly, and believe that they do so, but those with whom they are dealing do not. Leaders must be sensitive to the fact that fair does not always mean equal. This, too, is often difficult for others to understand.

The education sector often finds itself under a great deal of scrutiny. Instances of abuse of power are fodder for the media and we see them occur far too often (Boon, 2011). As a result, leaders must be diligent in their efforts to maintain their integrity, for once it is gone, it can be next to impossible to recover. Every action and every behavior of school leader is the result of

moral choices and deliberate decisions (Storey & Beeman, 2009). “Leaders must operate from moral authority based on ability, professional expertise and moral imperative rather than line authority” (Storey & Beeman, 2009, p, 763).

**Standard Six: Societal Context.** The sixth and final standard calls for school leaders to understand the profile of the community and, with that in mind, to respond to and influence the larger political, social, economic, legal and cultural context. Today’s societal and educational climates are changing quickly, making it necessary that school leaders connect with outside resources that help to enhance and accomplish the school’s mission (Daresh & Aplin, 2001). Schools and education have become political battlegrounds, and it serves superintendents well to establish relationships with lawmakers so that there is a voice advocating on behalf of the school community. It can also be important to have these same types of relationships with members of state education agencies. Whitaker (2007) believes that in today’s world it is not enough to be a solid educational leader. Leaders must become advocates for education on Capitol Hill, in state legislatures, and in our communities.

### **Person-Organization Fit**

In their online version, Merriam-Webster (2012) defines fit as “to be suitable for” or “to be in agreement or accord with.” According to Kristof (1996) P-O fit is defined as the compatibility between people and the organization with which they are associated. Ideally it occurs when they share the same values and can provide what the other needs. In the context of this study, the two definitions together describe how well the school or school board and the superintendent are suitable to, or in agreement with, one another.

### **Background of P-O Fit**

There have been theories of person-environment (P-E) interaction in management literature for decades (Kristof-Brown, et al., 2005). P-E fit is defined as the degree of match between an individual and his or her work environment (Sekiguchi, 2004). Out of this evolved several complementary theories such as person-job (P-J) fit, person-group (P-G) fit, person-supervisor (P-S) fit, and person-organization (P-O) fit (Kristof, 1996; Kristof-Brown, et al., 2005; Sekiguchi, 2004), with each looking more closely at particular elements that comprise the work environment. Each has a somewhat unique approach to identifying how an individual sees himself or herself working in a particular setting as it relates to the job tasks required (P-J fit) (Kristof, 1996; Kristof-Brown, et al., 2005), the relationships with others in the workplace (P-G or P-S fit) (Judge & Ferris, 1992; Kristof-Brown, et al., 2005), or with the organization as a whole (P-O fit) (Bertz & Judge, 1994; Kristof, 1996; Kristof-Brown, et al. 2005; O'Reilly).

For the purpose of identifying an appropriate person-environment theory for this research, P-O fit is believed to be the most suitable. Although the others could be used (particularly P-J fit and the relationship between a superintendent and the particular tasks to which a school board may want that individual to attend), P-O fit is more all encompassing and aligns well with the ISSL. The Iowa standards go beyond simply identifying tasks, including components such as ethics, the promotion of a shared vision, and the nurturing of a culture of learning (Iowa Department of Education, 2012). These standards would be difficult to accomplish through a checklist of tasks to be completed. Effectively performing the job of superintendent is much more than simply working through a list of specific tasks. Doing so requires that a certain culture is developed and/or maintained, which aligns to that of the community and the school board. As Morley (2007) put it, "Person-organization fit emphasizes the importance of fit between employees and work processes and the importance of creating an

organizational identity through the institutionalization of consistent values that permeate an organization's culture" (p. 10). School boards' expectations for superintendents are going to align with what they value.

### **Why is a Good Fit Necessary?**

"Finding employees that have a good fit with the organization is critical" (Sutarjo, 2011, p. 226). One of the main reasons why fit is important is that how an individual fits with an organization is a key component to reducing turnover (Arthur, et al., 2006; Kristof-Brown, et al., 2005; Schneider, 2001; Sutarjo, 2011; Verquer, Beehr, & Wagner, 2003; Wheeler, Gallagher, Brouer, & Sablinski, 2007).

The fit between the organization and an individual has also been related to job satisfaction, commitment to the organization, and task performance (Ostroff, Shin, & Kinicki, 2005; Schneider, 2001; Silverthorne, 2004). As an employee's satisfaction with their job increases, the commitment and task performance are obvious outcomes. In addition, when all of these components are in place, the employee will be less likely to seek employment elsewhere.

### **Summary**

The research on the impact and importance of superintendent/board relationships is abundant and clear—how they get along matters. However, often school boards fail to clearly share their expectations with superintendents. The ISSL are in place to help guide school boards in their evaluations of superintendents, but those may or may not reflect the wants and needs of a particular school board, despite the fact that superintendents have been informed that the ISSL should guide their work.

Something that is lacking from the research, and therefore the literature, are studies on the demographic characteristics of school board members and the relationship of those to their expectations. This study will, in a small way, provide some insight into that realm.

## **CHAPTER 3**

### **METHODOLOGY**

The purpose of this study was to understand the demographic make-up of school board members in the state of Iowa, to explore the relationship between those characteristics of school board members and the level of importance they place on the various ISSL, and to determine if those demographics can be used to predict the expectations board members have for their superintendents, as related to the ISSL. Understanding the relationship between the demographics of school board members and the expectations they have for superintendents as related to the ISSL will inform those seeking superintendent positions, increasing the likelihood that there will be a good match between the superintendent and the school board, therefore increasing the possibility that the superintendent would remain with the district for an extended period of time.

Ensuring a good match between the employer and employee is the basis for person-organization (P-O) fit theory. P-O fit is when, among other things, the employee possesses and demonstrates the ability to meet the demands and expectations of the organization, and there is congruence between the organization and the individual (Kristof, 1996). Sutarjo (2011) states that it is critical to find employees who are a good fit with the organization. The fit between the organization and the individual has been shown to related to various outcomes such as job satisfaction, commitment to the organization, turnover and intention to quit, and performance of tasks (Wheeler, Gallagher, Brouer, & Sablynski, 2007, Hoffman & Woehr, 2006, Kristof-Brown, Zimmerman, & Johnson, 2005, Verquer, Beehr, & Wagner, 2003).

This chapter provides information regarding the research design, methodological approach, research questions, the setting, participants, data collection, survey instrument, variables, and data analysis. Finally, the chapter will conclude with delimitations and limitations of the study.

### **Research Design**

This study used a quantitative approach and survey research methodology with a postpositivist philosophical foundation. Creswell (2009) describes postpositivists as those who try to determine the causes of events or actions. The goal of postpositive research is to “find the truth about something” (Willis, 2007, p. 74). However, postpositivists generally do not believe that the absolute truth will be found with a single research study, but rather a study, combined with others, can get you closer to finding the truth (Willis, 2007). Creswell states, “the intent is to reduce the ideas into a small, discrete set of ideas to test, such as the variables that comprise hypotheses and research questions” (p. 7). According to Phillips and Burbules (as cited in Creswell, 2009) a key assumption to postpositivism is that data, evidence, and rational considerations shape knowledge.

Like their positivist predecessors, postpositivist researchers understand the importance of objectivity and generalizability. However, unlike the positivists, postpositivists call for researchers to base their claims of understanding on probability, rather than certainty (Mertens, 2010).

Willis (2007) notes that the purpose of research in the postpositive paradigm is to look for universals that, when found, can be shared with practitioners to guide their practice. For this particular study, the ideas to test were whether or not there is a relationship between the characteristics of school board members and the level of importance they place upon the various

leadership standards in Iowa as they apply to superintendents, and whether those characteristics can predict expectations. Sharing the findings of this research, particularly with school boards, superintendents, and the organizations that provide those individuals with training and certification, is a true intention. Helping those entities to be better informed about the expectations school board members have for superintendents, based on the unique, individual characteristics of school board members, will help to improve and guide practice.

### **Methodological Approach**

For this study a survey research methodological approach was used. “A survey design provides a quantitative or numeric description of trends, attitudes, or opinions of a population” (Creswell, 2009, p. 145). A survey is a systematic way to collect data that is intended to quantitatively measure specific elements, through the use of a questionnaire (Aiman-Smith & Markham, 2004; Viser, Krosnick, & Lavrakas, 2000).

Sapsford (2007) points out that the primary purpose of survey data is to make planned comparisons. The survey research methodology is appropriate for this cross-sectional study because the goal is to collect information from school board members in the state of Iowa, regarding their demographic characteristics and the level of importance they give to each of the ISSL. Thus, comparisons are made based on the characteristics of the school board members.

The survey instrument used for the study was developed by the researcher and is described in greater detail in the Survey Instrument section of this chapter. It is important to note that a survey collects data from a single point in time. The survey instrument was consistently delivered to all participants, it was administered using Qualtrics software, and every participant received the exact same questions in exactly the same order.



Fowler's (1998) recommendations for survey design principles were considered when electing to use this approach and in the development of the instrument. Those include:

1. A strength of survey research is in asking people about their first hand experiences.
2. It is important to ask one question at a time.
3. Questions should be worded so that all participants are answering exactly the same question.
4. Questions should be worded so that all participants understand the questions.
5. The design of the survey should make following instructions, reading questions, and recording answers as easy as possible.

### **Research Questions**

The following questions guided this quantitative research study.

1. What is the demographic make-up of school board members in the state of Iowa?
2. What is the relationship between school board members' age, length of service on the board, and student enrollment of the district they serve, and the level of importance placed on the six Iowa Standards for School Leaders?
3. Is there a statistically significant difference between school board members' sex and highest level of education acquired and the level of importance placed on the six Iowa Standards for School Leaders?
4. To what extent does a school board members' age, sex, length of service on the board, and level of education acquired, predict the level of importance placed on Standard [1-6] of the ISSL construct, [shared vision, culture of learning, management, family and community, ethics, societal context?

5. How do school board members rank the ISSL standards relative to the most important characteristics for their district's superintendent?
6. What do school board members identify as the most important attributes of a superintendent?
7. What do school board members identify as the most important responsibilities for their district superintendent?
8. What do school board members identify as their top three expectations for their district superintendent?

### **Sample and Participants**

Participants in this research study were sitting public school board members in the state of Iowa. The Iowa Association of School Boards (IASB) represents K-12 school districts, area education agencies, and community colleges across the state of Iowa. IASB agreed to email a copy of the invitation to participate, including the link to the survey, to all school board members for whom they had an active email address. Currently IASB has approximately 1500 email addresses for the 1976 board members. For the 2012-13 academic year, all but five of the K-12 school districts in the state of Iowa belong to IASB (Heilegenthal, 2012; IASB, 2012).

Notices were sent to invite school board members to participate in the survey, along with a description of the research being conducted (see Appendix D). The notice also explained that they would receive a separate email with the survey link in approximately two days (see Appendix E). The second email, including the survey link, was distributed to those school board members with registered email addresses. One week later a follow-up email (see Appendix F) was be sent to school board members as a reminder to complete the survey.

### **Survey Instrument**

Using prior research and theory on school board composition and the ISSL, the researcher developed a 48-item survey instrument (Appendix C) using Qualtrics survey software. Five questions are related to school board members' characteristics, asking for their sex, age, highest level of education acquired, student enrollment of the district they serve, and the total number of years of service they have had on their present school board, as well as total years of service as a school board member. Following the questions on individual school board member characteristics are 35 statements, each of which is a criterion for the ISSL (Iowa Department of Education, 2012). The participants were asked to select the level to which they feel the statement is an important characteristic, trait, or activity for a superintendent. The four response choices are "not important," "of some importance," "important," or "of utmost importance."

In ranking the level of importance, middle positions such as "neutral" or "undecided" were purposely left out. When a middle position is provided it is difficult to determine whether that selection was made because the subject was truly unsure or undecided, or if it was made out of ignorance, uncooperativeness, reading difficulty, reluctance to answer, or inapplicability (Frery, 2001; Thomas, 2004). Another problem with providing a middle position is that it can alter the results to the point that "when a number of subjects choose it for invalid reasons, the average response level is raised or lowered erroneously" (Frery, 2001, p. 172). Instead of a middle, or neutral position, it is recommended that the choices offered be worded in such a way that the subject can avoid a firm stance (Frery, 2001). In the case of this study, providing the options "of slight importance" and "of moderate importance" offer subjects with options that avoid a firm stance.

Participants were asked to identify the number of years their current superintendent has been in that position, and to identify the level of satisfaction they have with their superintendent.

Three open ended questions followed, asking for the three most important attributes they see as necessary for a superintendent, the three most important responsibilities for superintendents, and the top three expectations they have as school board members for their superintendent. Finally, the survey asked the participants to place in rank order the six Iowa leadership standards.

### **Pilot of Survey Instrument**

In order to test the survey instrument developed by the researcher, board members of an Area Education Agency (AEA) were approached about taking part. This nine-member board serves AEA 267 in central Iowa. There are nine AEAs in place throughout the state to “work as educational partners with public and accredited, non-public schools to help students, school staff, parents, and communities” meet the challenges they face (Iowa Area Education Agencies, 2012). The exact role played by the AEAs is somewhat dependent upon the needs of the school districts they serve within their boundaries.

Using the AEA board of directors to pilot the survey was beneficial because these board members operate very much like a school board in that their primary roles are to determine policy, provide general oversight of the agency’s business, and hire a chief administrator to carry out those policies. But perhaps more importantly, they must evaluate their chief administrator based upon the ISSL, just as school board members must do with their superintendent. Their familiarity with, and use of, the ISSL standards made them a good group with whom to pilot this survey.

Those who took part in the pilot found that the survey was easy to move through, with both the directions and questions clear and simple to understand. The time it took each person to complete the survey was approximately 15 minutes. There were no issues expressed by the group who took part in the pilot. There were two comments from participants in the pilot that pertained

to the type of response that might be expected. Their concern was that all, or nearly all, of the responses to the questions relating to each of the 35 criteria of the ISSL would be “of utmost importance,” thereby limiting the usefulness of that data. Although a legitimate concern, that data, combined with the questions that follow that particular section, provided information that was useful to the researcher.

However, based on the feedback of those who piloted the survey, and in order to attempt to provide more depth, clarifying questions were added to each of the questions regarding the importance given to each of the 35 criteria. The survey was revised to include asking participants to identify whether each criterion is a part of their superintendent’s evaluation. Participants could select from one of four choices to these questions: “no,” “sometimes,” “yes,” or “I don’t know.”

### **Data Collection**

The survey was distributed via email to K-12 public school board members currently serving in the state of Iowa, for whom an active email address is on file with IASB. Participants were invited to take part in a confidential online survey (See Appendix C) being conducted as a dissertation research project for a Drake doctoral candidate. Emails (see Appendices D and E) informed potential participants of the purpose of the study, and that participation was voluntary, but in accessing the link to the survey they were giving their consent to participate.

IASB agreed to disseminate information to all school board members for whom they had an email address. Qualtrics online survey software was utilized to deliver the survey, as well as to collect and store the data.

A week after the survey link is sent to school board members, another email was sent as a reminder to consider participation. The survey was closed two weeks after this last email.

### **Variables**

This study sought to examine the expectations school board members have for superintendents as related to the ISSL using the results of the survey described above. The study determined the differences in expectations school board members have for their superintendent based on their unique characteristics. The independent variables include age, gender, highest level of education, years of service on the board, and school district enrollment. The six dependent variables are each of the six ISSL. They include shared vision, culture of learning, management, family and community, ethics, and societal context.

### **Independent Variables**

The independent variables were measured through participant responses on the survey. The independent variables consist of the characteristics of school board members, including their age, sex, highest level of education, years of service on the board, and district enrollment. The method of measurement for each of the independent variables is described below.

**Age.** Age is measured by participants identifying their age at the time they complete the survey. Age was treated as a continuous variable.

**Sex.** Sex was treated as a dichotomous variable. Participants were asked to identify themselves as male (coded=1) or female (coded=2).

**Highest Level of Education.** For this variable participants selected from one of eight options: less than a high school diploma, a high school diploma or GED, some college, a 2-year college degree or equivalent, a 4-year college degree, masters degree, doctoral degree, or professional degree (JD, MD).

**Years of Service on the School Board.** Participants were asked for the total number of years they have served on the school board.

**District Enrollment.** Participants were asked to provide the estimated number of students enrolled in the district in which the participant is a member of the school board.

### **Dependent Variables**

There are six dependent variables for this study, each related to the expectations school board members have for their superintendent, based on each of the six Iowa leadership standards. These were measured by asking the participants to identify their level of agreement as to the importance they place on each of 35 statements. Each statement is a criterion of the ISSL, with each being unique to one of the six standards.

Each of the 35 criterion begins with the stem, “The superintendent should...” and is then followed by the specific criterion, as written in the ISSL document (See Appendix A). Although participants identified the level of importance for each of the 35 criteria, answers were treated as a response to the associated standard. Not all standards have the same number of criterion. Standard 2 has 11 criteria, Standards 1 and 3 have six each, Standard 5 has five, Standard 4 has four, and Standard 6 has just three.

**Standard 1: Shared Vision.** Participants were asked to rate the level of importance given to the criterion listed for this standard using a four point Likert-type scale where 1 = not important, 2 = of some importance, 3 = important, and 4 = of utmost importance. The higher the score the greater emphasis the participant placed on this criterion, and therefore the associated standard, shared vision.

**Standard 2: Culture of Learning.** Participants were asked to rate the level of importance given to the criterion listed for this standard using a four point Likert-type scale where 1 = not important, 2 = of some importance, 3 = important, and 4 = of utmost importance.

The higher the score the greater emphasis the participant places on this criterion, and therefore the associated standard, a culture of learning.

**Standard 3: Management.** Participants were asked to rate the level of importance given to the criterion listed for this standard using a four point Likert-type scale where 1 = not important, 2 = of some importance, 3 = important, and 4 = of utmost importance. The higher the score the greater emphasis the participant places on this criterion, and therefore the associated standard, management.

**Standard 4: Family and Community.** Participants were asked to rate the level of importance given to the criterion listed for this standard using a four point Likert-type scale where 1 = not important, 2 = of some importance, 3 = important, and 4 = of utmost importance. The higher the score the greater emphasis the participant places on this criterion, and therefore the associated standard, family and community.

**Standard 5: Ethics.** Participants were asked to rate the level of importance given to the criterion listed for this standard using a four point Likert-type scale where 1 = not important, 2 = of some importance, 3 = important, and 4 = of utmost importance. The higher the score the greater emphasis the participant places on this criterion, and therefore the associated standard, ethics.

**Standard 6: Societal Context.** Participants were asked to rate the level of importance given to the criterion listed for this standard using a four point Likert-type scale where 1 = not important, 2 = of some importance, 3 = important, and 4 = of utmost importance. The higher the score the greater emphasis the participant places on this criterion, and therefore the associated standard, societal context.

### **Summary of Variables and Connection to Theoretical Framework**



A summary of the independent and dependent variables, their relationship to Kristof's (1996) P-O fit designation, and method of measurement is provided in Table 3.1.

Table 3.1

*Connections to Theoretical Framework and Review of Measurement Variables*

<b>Fit</b>	<b>Variable</b>	<b>Type</b>	<b>Description (Measured By)</b>
NA	Gender	IV	Recoded to a dichotomous variable 0=male 1=female
NA	Age	IV	Continuous variable
NA	Highest level of education	IV	Ordinal scale
NA	Years of service on the board	IV	Continuous variable
NA	District enrollment	IV	Continuous variable
Supplementary	Standard 1: Shared Vision	DV	Likert-type measurement of level of importance, ordinal scale
Supplementary	Standard 2: Culture of Learning	DV	Likert-type measurement of level of importance, ordinal scale
Complementary	Standard 3: Management	DV	Likert-type measurement of level of importance, ordinal scale
Complementary	Standard 4: Family & Community	DV	Likert-type measurement of level of importance, ordinal scale
Supplementary	Standard 5: Ethics	DV	Likert-type measurement of level of importance, ordinal scale
Supplementary	Standard 6: Societal Context	DV	Likert-type measurement of level of importance, ordinal scale

### **Data Analysis Procedures**

The data were analyzed using descriptive statistics and inferential techniques. This section describes the statistical methods that were used for each of the research questions.

#### **Research Question 1**

The first research question for this study is *What is the demographic make-up of school board members in the state of Iowa?* To address this question descriptive statistics were conducted to analyze and summarize the composition of Iowa school board members. A summary of the descriptive statistics is provided.

#### **Research Question 2**

The second question, *What is the relationship between school board members' age, length of service on the board, and student enrollment of the district they serve, and the level of importance placed on the six Iowa Standards for School Leaders?* required that correlations be conducted.

Correlations were conducted for the IVs of age, years of service on the board, and district enrollment. Correlations allow the researcher to assess the linear relationship between two quantitative variables, or within and between multiple sets of variables (Green & Salkind, 2011). This study evaluated the relationship between the IVs of age, years of service on the board, and district enrollment with each of the six DVs. A correlation matrix is provided for each of the variables.

### **Research Question 3**

The third question, *Is there a statistically significant difference between school board members' sex and highest level of education acquired and the level of importance placed on the six Iowa Standards for School Leaders?* requires the use of independent samples *t*-tests for sex, and a one-way ANOVA for the highest education acquired. Independent samples *t*-tests allow researchers to evaluate the difference between the means of two independent groups (Green & Salkind, 2011). Correlations are used to “measure the association between variables” (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2007, p. 56), and ANOVAs are used to compare two or more means to evaluate whether there any differences among them that are statistically significant (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2007).

For the IV of sex there were six independent samples *t*-tests conducted with sex as the IV and each of the six ISSL constructs as the DV. Independent samples *t*-tests work well when the

grouping variable (IV) is divided into two groups (Green & Salkind, 2011). The DV is the level to which each school board member places importance on each of the six ISSL constructs.

To determine the relationship between the school board members' highest level of educational attainment and their expectations for superintendents, one-way analyses of variance (ANOVAs) were conducted. ANOVAs "assess the relationship of one or more factors with a dependent variable" (Green & Salkind, 2011, p. 182). It is a way to compare two or more means to determine if there are any statistically significant differences among those means (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2007). One ANOVA was conducted for each of the six ISSL constructs.

#### **Research Question 4**

Subsections a-f in research question 4 are all the same with the exception of the final phrase, which addresses the specific ISSL construct being measured. They read, "*To what extent does a school board members' age, sex, length of service on the board, and level of education acquired, predict the level of importance placed on Standard [1-6] of the ISSL construct, [shared vision, culture of learning, management, family and community, ethics, societal context]?*" In order to answer these questions, sequential hierarchical multiple regressions were applied, preceded by correlations.

**Correlations.** A Pearson product-moment correlation was run for all variables in the regression analysis to determine the extent to which the variables were related, and whether any multicollinearity existed. Multicollinearity exists when variables are too highly correlated to one another (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2007). If they are too highly correlated, it is in essence the measurement of the same thing. This sort of redundancy can cause statistical issues if not caught and corrected prior to running the regression analyses. A correlation matrix that includes all of the variables has been developed.

**Hierarchical multiple regression.** Regression analyses are used to assess the relationship between one dependent variable and several independent variables (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2007). In other words, it is a way to predict the values of a dependent variable based on the unique values of independent variables (Johnson & Christensen, 2012). Using multiple regression allowed the researcher to combine several independent variables to predict a dependent variable (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2007). The regression equation is:

$$Y' = A + B_1X_1 + B_2X_2 + \dots + B_kX_k$$

where  $Y'$  is “the predicted value on the DV” (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2007, p. 118). The  $X$ s represent the various IVs (the number of which varies according to the particular research being conducted), while the  $A$  is the  $Y$  intercept when all of the  $X$ s are zero, and the  $B$ s are the regression coefficients (slope of the line) that are assigned to each IV (Johnson & Christensen, 2012). What this equation provides is a regression line, from which a prediction for the value of the DV can be made for each of the various values for  $X$  (the independent variables) (Johnson & Christensen, 2012).

Multiple regression allows a researcher to measure effect size of a variable, in addition to the impact an independent variable has on the dependent variable. This procedure has the benefit, as the equation above illustrates, of allowing several variables to be considered as a group when determining the impact on the DV. For this study the equation continues to  $B_4X_4$  to reflect the four IVs being applied to the regression.

For the hierarchical regression analyses the IVs were placed into one of two blocks. School board members’ age and sex will be in one block, while their years of service on the board and their level of education were placed into the other block. The rationale for this placement is in separating the characteristics that the members essentially have no control over

(age and sex) from those with which they have had control (years of service on the board and highest level of education acquired). One IV, district enrollment, was left out of the regression due to the fact that it is neither a personal characteristic specific to a board member (such as age and sex), nor is it something with which the school board member has any control (such as is the case with years served on the board or the highest level of education acquired).

The dependent variable is the expectations school board members have for their superintendents, as related to the ISSL constructs. Those constructs include shared vision, culture of learning, management, family and community, ethics, and societal context.

### **Research Question 5**

The fifth question states: *“How do school board members rank the ISSL standards relative to the most important characteristics for their district’s superintendent?”* Reporting for this question consists of identifying and reporting the percentages for each of the six ISSL.

### **Research Questions 6-8**

Research question 6 asks board members, *“What do school board members identify as the most important attributes of a superintendent?”* Question 7 asks, *“What do school board members identify as the most important responsibilities for their district superintendent?”* and number 8 says, *“What do school board members identify as their top three expectations for their district superintendent?”* Responses to each of these qualitative questions were addressed and reported in the same manner. For these questions common themes that emerged from the responses provided were identified. “Themes come from both the data and from the investigator’s prior theoretical understanding of the phenomenon under study.” (Ryan & Bernard, 2003, p. 88)

### **Delimitations**

This study is delimited to active school board members from the state of Iowa. Although the standards for school leaders in Iowa could be used in evaluating school board members' expectations of superintendents in other states, it is not within the scope of this study. The ISSL standards, although related to the ISSLC standards and those used in other states, were designed specifically for, and used exclusively in, the state of Iowa.

### **Limitations**

For the purpose of this study the researcher selected the ISSL from which to evaluate the expectations school board members have for their superintendents. There could have been a number of other types of expectation considered, but given that superintendents in Iowa are to be evaluated based upon the ISSL, it made sense to use those standards in this study.

The school board members asked to participate in the study were limited to those who had an active email address on file with IASB. Not all school board members have provided email addresses, and it is feasible that not all who have email addresses on file access those on a regular basis.

The researcher chose only five possible demographic traits of school board members from which to evaluate expectations. This number could be much larger, and there could be valid arguments made as to why other characteristics could be included in future studies.

The research design is cross-sectional, thus the data collected were from a set point in time. School board members come and go, so using the data to make predictions about the expectations of future board members may be limited.

### **Summary**

This chapter provided an overview of the methodological approach for this study. This included a review of the sample and participants, and a description of the survey instrument.

Included in the survey instrument section was a discussion of the pilot survey used to validate the survey design and the changes made as a result of the feedback from the pilot. A description of the data collection and analysis procedures was also provided, as well as a description of the variables that are part of this study. Finally, delimitations and limitations were addressed.

## **CHAPTER 4**

### **RESULTS**

The purpose of this study was to examine the expectations school board members have for superintendents as related to the ISSL. The framework of this study was based upon the person-organization (P-O) fit theory, as defined by Kristof (1996). The hypothesis for the study was that school board members' age, sex, years of service on the board, level of education, and district enrollment would impact the expectations they have for superintendents.

This chapter provides results of the data analysis and addresses the eight research questions. The chapter is divided into five sections. The first section discusses data screening and the process of normality assumptions. The second section shares the descriptive statistics for the variable, thus addressing the first research question. Section three includes the results of the independent samples t-tests, correlations between the dependent and independent variables, and ANOVAs, as described in research questions two and three. The fourth section describes the results of the hierarchical regression used to answer research question four. Question five asked board members to rank order each of the ISSL. The percentages for these rankings are provided in section five. Sections six, seven and eight provide the qualitative themes that emerged from the data analysis to address research questions six, seven, and eight.

#### **Data Screening and Assumptions of Normality**

Prior to conducting statistical analyses, data were screened for missing values. Cases with missing data were deleted. Results revealed that there were 237 surveys started, with 187 of those providing enough data to be included in the analyses.

The data were then evaluated for skewness and kurtosis, two components of normality (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2007). Skew is the tilt in a distribution, while kurtosis is to what degree



there is a “peak” (Garson, 2012). Both dependent and independent variables were evaluated for skewness and kurtosis. If a distribution is normal both the skew and kurtosis values are zero (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2007). Garson (2012) notes that for both the skew and kurtosis one can assume a normal range being between -2 and +2, but -3 to +3 is acceptable according to some authors. Given this guidance, the data indicate skewness and kurtosis values outside of that range for the independent variable *district enrollment*, and the kurtosis value outside of the normal range for the independent variable *years served on the school board*. The results of the assessment for normality are reported in Table 4.1.

Table 4.1

*Assessment of Normality for Variables in the Model (n = 187)*

Variables	Skew	SE of Skew	Kurtosis	SE of Kurtosis
Age	.354	.180	-.089	.357
Sex	.262	.178	-1.952	.355
Years on school board	1.779	.178	4.595	.354
District enrollment	3.390	.178	15.223	.354
Highest education	-.473	.178	-.247	.354
Standard 1—Shared vision*	-.414	.178	-.944	.354
Standard 2—Culture of learning*	-.278	.178	-.559	.354
Standard 3—Management*	-.625	.178	-.066	.354
Standard 4—Family/Community*	-.162	.178	-.393	.354
Standard 5—Ethics*	-.840	.178	.892	.354
Standard 6—Societal context*	-.122	.178	-.650	.354

\*Dependent variables

### Frequencies and Descriptive Statistics

Descriptive statistics were run for each of the variables in the study. Table 4.2 reports the results of the descriptive analyses, including the range, mean, and standard deviation for each

variable. One hundred five of the participants, or 56.1% were male with 81 (43.3%) female. One participant did not identify his/her sex.

Table 4.2

*Descriptive Statistics for Independent and Dependent Variables (n = 187)*

Variables	Min	Max	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Age	31	83	53.17	9.82
Sex (male = 1)	1	2	1.44	.50
Years Served on School Board	1	37	7.00	5.80
Highest Level of Education <sup>a</sup>	2	5	4.00	.86
District Enrollment	49	16500	1786.29	2126.62
Shared Vision (Standard 1)	16.00	24.00	21.32	2.21
Culture of Learning (Standard 2)	26.00	44.00	37.42	4.27
Management (Standard 3)	13.00	24.00	21.07	2.26
Family & Community (Standard 4)	6.00	16.00	12.25	2.24
Ethics (Standard 5)	11.00	20.00	17.68	1.83
Societal Context (Standard 6)	6.00	12.00	9.88	1.45

Note: <sup>a</sup>Scale: 2 = HS diploma or GED, 3 = Some college, 4 = college degree, 5 = graduate degree

### **Correlations, *t*-Tests, and ANOVA**

#### **Correlations**

This study examined the relationships, or association, between variables using Pearson correlation coefficients, the most commonly used measure of association (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2007). “Correlation is the measure of the size and direction of the linear relationship between variables” (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2007, p. 56). An index of effect size is computed with a range of -1 to +1 (Green and Salkind, 2011), where a value of zero represents no linear relationship or predictability between variables (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2007). Pearson correlation coefficients were computed among each of the independent and dependent variables for this study, the results

of which can be seen in Table 4.3. To avoid the possibility of a Type I error in determining the statistical significance, the Bonferonni adjustment was used, dividing the generally accepted alpha level of .05 by the number of correlations, in this case, 45. In doing so a new alpha level of .0011 is created. In order for a correlation to be statistically significant a  $p$  value of less than .0011 was required. Using this level to determine significance, 11 of the 45 correlations were deemed significant, and are indicated as such in Table 4.3 by an asterisk (\*).

Green and Salkind (2011) state that when looking at correlation coefficients, one can interpret the strength of the relationship. They state that a correlation coefficient of .10 indicates a small relationship between variables, .30 indicates a medium relationship, and .50 or greater indicates a large (strong) relationship. Results indicate that each of the dependent variables correlated strongly ( $r$  values of .50 or greater) with the other dependent variables. This means that as the responses on one of the ISSL standards increased, so did the responses on the other standards, and vice versa. There was one independent variable (age) that correlated with another independent variable (years of service on the board), indicating that there is a relationship between the two ( $r = .27, p < .0011$ ); specifically, as age increased so did years of service on the board. However, there were no correlations between independent and dependent variables that were statistically significant.

Table 4.3

*Correlation Matrix – All Independent and Dependent Variables (n = 187)*

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
1 Age	--									
2 Sex	-.19	--								
3 Years served on school board	.27*	-.17	--							
4 Level of education	-.06	-.01	-.12	--						
5 Shared vision (Standard 1)	-.03	.20	-.05	.12	--					
6 Culture of Learning (Standard 2)	.09	.18	-.05	.04	.75*	--				
7 Management (Standard 3)	.01	.16	-.07	.07	.63*	.77*	--			
8 Family/Comm. (Standard 4)	.13	.13	-.12	-.02	.52*	.72*	.59*	--		
9 Ethics (Standard 5)	.05	.15	-.01	-.06	.60*	.70*	.60*	.51*	--	
10 Societal Context (Standard 6)	-.07	.12	-.10	.03	.67*	.67*	.67*	.66*	.63*	--

Note: \*  $p < .0011$  Bonferonni adjustment for multiple correlations to minimize chances of a Type 1 error.

### Independent Samples *t*-Test

Six independent samples *t*-test were conducted to determine if there was a statistically significant difference between a board members' sex and the level of importance placed on each of the six Iowa Standards for School Leaders. Independent samples *t*-tests are used to evaluate the difference between two means from independent groups (Green & Salkind, 2011). A summary of the independent samples *t*-test is displayed in Table 4.4.

Of the six dependent variables, four were statistically significant. The standard shared vision was statistically significant, indicating that female school board members ( $M = 21.80$ ,  $SD = 2.13$ ) placed slightly more importance on shared vision than male school board members ( $M = 20.92$ ,  $SD = 2.19$ ). Culture of learning was also statistically significant, with female board members ( $M = 38.27$ ,  $SD = 4.01$ ) ranking the standard more important than male board members ( $M = 36.72$ ,  $SD = 4.37$ ). Management was statistically significant with female board members ( $M = 21.48$ ,  $SD = 2.16$ ) giving higher levels of importance to this standard than their male counterparts ( $M = 20.73$ ,  $SD = 2.30$ ). And finally, ethics was statistically significant, indicating that the female board members ( $M = 17.98$ ,  $SD = 1.90$ ) placed slightly more importance on the standard than male board members ( $M = 17.44$ ,  $SD = 1.75$ ).

Table 4.4

*Independent Samples t-tests – Summary of Results (n = 186)*

	Male Board Members		Female Board Members		<i>t</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>p</i>	Confidence Intervals	
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>				Lower	Upper
Shared Vision	20.92	2.19	21.80	2.13	-2.74	184	.007*	-1.51	-.25
Culture of Learning	36.72	4.37	38.27	4.01	-2.48	184	.014*	-2.78	-.32
Management	20.73	2.30	21.48	2.16	-2.26	184	.025*	-1.40	-.09
Family/Comm.	12.00	2.23	12.57	2.23	-1.72	184	.087	-1.22	.08
Ethics	17.44	1.75	17.98	1.90	-2.00	184	.047*	-1.07	-.01
Societal Context	9.71	1.36	10.07	1.55	-1.69	184	.093	-.78	.06

*Note.* Levene's test for equal variances was not significant, indicating that variances were assumed equal.

\*  $p < .05$

**One-Way ANOVA**

A one-way analysis of variance was conducted to evaluate the relationship between a school board member's highest level of education, and the importance they place on each of the Iowa Standards for School Leaders. The independent variable, level of education, included four levels: high school diploma or General Educational Development (GED) certification, some

college, college degree, and graduate degree. Initially participants were asked to identify their level of education that included seven levels, but the data were recoded due to low numbers in some of those categories. Less than high school was eliminated (only one respondent), and two-year and four-year college degrees were combined into “college degree,” and masters and terminal degrees were combined into “graduate degree.” The dependent variable was the level of importance the board members placed upon each of the six ISSL. Table 4.5 reports the group n’s, means, and standard deviations for education levels in each of the six ISSL standards.

Table 4.5

*Means and Standard Deviations Comparing the Four Levels of Education Groups for the DVs*

		Shared Vision		Culture of Learning		Management		Family & Community		Ethics		Societal Context	
	<i>n</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
High School Diploma/GED	14	21.86	2.57	38.79	4.37	21.21	2.33	12.86	1.61	18.64	1.82	10.21	1.58
Some College	21	19.81	2.11	36.09	3.80	20.71	1.85	11.90	1.55	17.62	1.43	9.52	1.17
College Degree	99	21.44	2.00	37.33	3.98	20.98	2.20	12.16	2.17	17.60	1.79	9.79	1.46
Graduate Degree	52	21.60	2.32	37.88	4.80	21.40	2.51	12.46	2.67	17.70	1.98	10.10	1.49

**Standard One—Shared Vision.** A one-way analysis of variance was conducted to evaluate the relationship between school board members’ level of education and the importance they place upon the ISSL standard, shared vision. The ANOVA was statistically significant  $F(3, 182) = 4.14, p < .05 \eta^2 = .06$  revealing that 6% of the variance in shared vision can be explained by level of education.

Because the overall ANOVA was statistically significant, follow-up tests were conducted to evaluate pairwise differences among the means between groups. Levene’s test for homogeneity was not significant so equal variances are assumed and post hoc comparisons were conducted using Tukey’s test. There was a significant difference in the means between the

participants with some college and each of the other three educational levels. The group with some college rated the ISSL, shared vision, lower in importance than participants with a high school diploma or GED, a college degree, or a graduate degree. The 95% confidence intervals for the pairwise differences, as well as the means and standard deviations for the four education level groups, are reported in Table 4.6.

Table 4.6

*95% Confidence Intervals of Pairwise Differences in Mean Changes in Educational Level*

Level of Education	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	HS diploma or GED	Some college	College degree
HS diploma/GED	21.86	2.57			
Some college	19.81	2.11	-3.97, -.12*		
College degree	21.44	2.00	-.41, .61	.29, 2.97*	
Graduate degree	21.60	2.32	-1.94, 1.42	.34, 3.23*	-.80, 1.12

Note: An asterisk indicates that the 95% confidence interval does not contain zero, and therefore the difference in means is significant at the .05 significance level using Tukey's procedure.

**Standard Two—Culture of Learning.** A one-way analysis of variance was conducted to evaluate the relationship between school board members' level of education and the importance they place upon the ISSL standard, culture of learning. The ANOVA was not significant,  $F(3, 182) = 1.39, p = .25$ , indicating that there were not statistically significant differences based on participants' level of education and the level to which participants ranked the importance of culture of learning.

**Standard Three—Management.** A one-way analysis of variance was conducted to evaluate the relationship between school board members' level of education and the importance they place upon the ISSL standard, management. The ANOVA was not significant,  $F(3, 182) = .62, p = .60$ , indicating that there were not statistically significant differences based on

participants' level of education and the level to which participants ranked the importance of management.

**Standard Four—Family and Community.** A one-way analysis of variance was conducted to evaluate the relationship between school board members' level of education and the importance they place upon the ISSL standard, family and community.. The ANOVA was not significant,  $F(3, 182) = .71, p = .55$ , indicating that there were not statistically significant differences based on participants' level of education and the level to which participants ranked the importance of family and community.

**Standard Five—Ethics.** A one-way analysis of variance was conducted to evaluate the relationship between school board members' level of education and the importance they place upon the ISSL standard, ethics. The ANOVA was not significant,  $F(3, 182) = 1.39, p = .25$ , indicating that there were not statistically significant differences based on participants' level of education and the level to which participants ranked the importance of ethics.

**Standard Six—Societal Context.** A one-way analysis of variance was conducted to evaluate the relationship between school board members' level of education and the importance they place upon the ISSL standard, societal context. The ANOVA was not significant,  $F(3, 182) = 1.20, p = .31$ , indicating that there were not statistically significant differences based on participants' level of education and the level to which participants ranked the importance of societal context.

### **Multiple Regression Analyses**

A sequential (hierarchical) regression approach was used to determine whether the independent variables were statistically significant predictors of each of the dependent variables. Six sequential hierarchical regression analyses were conducted, with two blocks in each analysis.



The independent variables included age and sex in one block, and highest level of education attained and years of service on the board in the other. District enrollment was not included in the regression analyses, believing that it did not fit well with two factors with which participants had no control (age and sex), or two factors that represent life experiences (level of education and years served on the school board). These four independent variables used in the regression are more “personal” identifiers and specific to the individual, thus district enrollment was not included in the regression analyses. The following sections report the results of the regression analyses for each of the six dependent variables.

### **Standard One—Shared Vision**

A sequential hierarchical regression was conducted on the dependent variable of the first ISSL, shared vision. Table 4.7 reports the results of the regression analysis; specifically, the unstandardized regression coefficients ( $b$ ), the standard error ( $SE\ b$ ), the standardized regression coefficient ( $\beta$ ), and the variance ( $R^2$ ) for each block.

**Block 1.** Results for the regression analysis for block 1  $F(2, 179) = 3.55, p < .05$  indicate that the variable of sex ( $\beta = .195, p < .05$ ) is the only significant predictor for shared vision, accounting for just under 4% ( $R^2 = .038$ ) of the variance in shared vision.

**Block 2.** Adding the independent variables over which board members have had some control, years served on the school board and the highest attained level of education, in block 2 to the hierarchical regression analysis produced results for the full model. In the full model,  $F(4, 177) = 2.57, p < .05$ , only sex ( $\beta = .191, p < .05$ ), was a significant predictors of shared vision, accounting for 5.5% ( $R^2 = .055$ ) of the variance in shared vision.

Table 4.7

*Hierarchical Regression Coefficients for Shared Vision (n = 182),  $R^2 = .055$*

	<i>b</i>	<i>SE b</i>	$\beta$
Block 1			
Constant	20.075	1.103	
Age	-.001	.017	-.003
Sex	.867	.332	.195*
Block 2-full model			
Constant	19.199	1.220	
Age	-.001	.017	-.008
Sex	.851	.334	.191*
Years served on school board	-.007	.030	-.012
Highest level of education	.205	.120	.127

Note: Block 1:  $R^2 = .038$ , Block 2:  $R^2 = .055$

Note: \*  $p < .05$

### Standard Two—Culture of Learning

A sequential hierarchical regression was conducted on the dependent variable of the second ISSL, culture of learning. Table 4.8 reports the results for the variables that were in the blocks entered into the regression analysis, the unstandardized regression coefficients (*b*), the standard error (*SE b*), the standardized regression coefficient ( $\beta$ ), and the variance ( $R^2$ ) for each block.

**Block 1.** Results for the regression analysis for block 1  $F(2, 179) = 4.10$ ,  $p < .05$  indicate that only the variable sex ( $\beta = .193$ ,  $p < .05$ ) is a significant predictor for culture of learning accounting for just over 4% ( $R^2 = .044$ ) of the variance in culture of learning.

**Block 2.** Adding the independent variables over which board members have had some control, years served on the school board and the highest attained level of education, in block 2 to the hierarchical regression analysis produced results for the full model which was not statistically significant  $F(4, 177) = 2.25$ ,  $p = .07$ .

Table 4.8

*Hierarchical Regression Coefficients for Culture of Learning (n = 182),  $R^2 = .048$*

	<i>b</i>	<i>SE b</i>	$\beta$
Block 1			
Constant	32.074	2.131	
Age	.055	.033	.125
Sex	1.665	.642	.193
Block 2-full model			
Constant	31.830	2.371	
Age	.061	.034	.139
Sex	1.594	.649	.185
Years served on school board	-.048	.057	-.064
Highest level of education	.071	.234	.023

Note: Block 1:  $R^2 = .044$ , Block 2:  $R^2 = .048$

Note: \*  $p < .05$

### Standard Three—Management

A sequential hierarchical regression was conducted on the dependent variable of the third ISSL, management. Table 4.9 reports the results for the variables that were in the blocks entered into the regression analysis, the unstandardized regression coefficients (*b*), the standard error (*SE b*), the standardized regression coefficient ( $\beta$ ), and the variance ( $R^2$ ) for each block.

**Block 1.** Results for the regression analysis for block 1 (age and sex) indicated that age and sex  $F(2, 179) = 2.07$ ,  $p = .13$ ,  $R^2 = .023$ , are not significant predictors for management.

**Block 2.** Adding the independent variables over which board members have had some control, years served on the school board and the highest attained level of education, in block 2 to the hierarchical regression analysis produced results for the full model, which was not statistically significant,  $F(4, 177) = 1.35$ ,  $p = .25$ .

Table 4.9

*Hierarchical Regression Coefficients for Management (n = 182),  $R^2 = .030$*

	<i>b</i>	<i>SE b</i>	$\beta$
Block 1			
Constant	19.701	1.137	
Age	.007	.017	.028
Sex	.698	.343	.153
Block 2-full model			
Constant	19.219	1.262	
Age	.008	.018	.034
Sex	.675	.346	.148
Years served on school board	-.015	.031	-.038
Highest level of education	.117	.125	.072

Note: Block 1:  $R^2 = .023$ , Block 2:  $R^2 = .030$

Note: \*  $p < .05$

#### Standard Four—Family and Community

A sequential hierarchical regression was conducted on the dependent variable of the fourth ISSL, family and community. Table 4.10 reports the results for the variables that were in the blocks entered into the regression analysis, the unstandardized regression coefficients (*b*), the standard error (*SE b*), the standardized regression coefficient ( $\beta$ ), and the variance ( $R^2$ ) for each block.

**Block 1.** Results for the regression analysis for block 1  $F(2, 179) = 3.29$ ,  $p < .05$ ,  $R^2 = .035$ , indicated that age ( $\beta = .151$ ,  $p < .05$ ) is a significant predictors of family and community.

**Block 2.** Adding the independent variables over which board members have had some control, years served on the school board and the highest attained level of education, in block 2 to the hierarchical regression analysis produced results for the full model, which was statistically significant,  $F(4, 177) = 3.00$ ,  $p < .05$ . In the full model, age ( $\beta = .196$ ,  $p < .05$ ) and years served on the school board ( $\beta = -.174$ ,  $p < .50$ ) were significant predictors of ratings on family and

community. However, years of service was a negative predictor indicating that the more years of service on the board the less importance placed on the construct of family and community.

Table 4.10

*Hierarchical Regression Coefficients for Family and Community (n = 182),  $R^2 = .062$*

	<i>b</i>	<i>SE b</i>	$\beta$
Block 1			
Constant	9.463	1.120	
Age	.035	.017	.151*
Sex	.651	.337	.144
Block 2-full model			
Constant	9.927	1.230	
Age	.045	.018	.196*
Sex	.555	.337	.123
Years served on school board	-.068	.030	-.174*
Highest level of education	-.086	.121	-.052

Note: Block 1:  $R^2 = .035$ , Block 2:  $R^2 = .062$

Note: \*  $p < .05$

### Standard Five—Ethics

A sequential hierarchical regression was conducted on the dependent variable of the fifth ISSL, ethics. Table 4.11 reports the results for the variables that were in the blocks that were entered into the regression analysis, the unstandardized regression coefficients (*b*), the standard error (*SE b*), the standardized regression coefficient ( $\beta$ ), and the variance ( $R^2$ ) for each block.

**Block 1.** Results for the regression analysis for block 1 (age and sex) indicated that age and sex  $F(2, 179) = 2.11$ ,  $p = .12$ ,  $R^2 = .023$ , are not significant predictors for ethics.

**Block 2.** Adding the independent variables over which board members have had some control, years served on the school board and the highest attained level of education, in block 2 to the hierarchical regression analysis produced results for the full model, which was not statistically significant,  $F(4, 177) = 1.20$ ,  $p = .32$ .

Table 4.11

*Hierarchical Regression Coefficients for Ethics (n = 182), R<sup>2</sup> = .026*

	<i>b</i>	<i>SE b</i>	$\beta$
Block 1			
Constant	16.191	.919	
Age	.012	.014	.065
Sex	.552	.277	.150
Block 2-full model			
Constant	16.525	1.023	
Age	.041	.015	.075
Sex	.543	.280	.147
Years served on school board	-.008	.025	-.026
Highest level of education	-.073	.101	-.055

Note: Block 1:  $R^2 = .023$ , Block 2:  $R^2 = .026$ Note: \*  $p < .05$ **Standard Six—Societal Context**

A sequential hierarchical regression was conducted on the dependent variable of the sixth ISSL, societal context. Table 4.12 reports the results for the variables that were in the blocks entered into the regression analysis, the unstandardized regression coefficients (*b*), the standard error (*SE b*), the standardized regression coefficient ( $\beta$ ), and the variance ( $R^2$ ) for each block.

**Block 1.** Results for the regression analysis for block 1 (age and sex) indicated that age and sex  $F(2, 179) = 1.26$ ,  $p = .29$ ,  $R^2 = .014$ , are not significant predictors for societal context.

**Block 2.** Adding the independent variables over which board members have had some control, years served on the school board and the highest attained level of education, in block 2 to the hierarchical regression analysis produced results for the full model, which was not statistically significant,  $F(4, 177) = .87$ ,  $p = .48$ .

Table 4.12

*Hierarchical Regression Coefficients for Societal Context (n = 182),  $R^2 = .019$*

	<i>b</i>	<i>SE b</i>	$\beta$
Block 1			
Constant	9.871	.733	
Age	-.008	.011	-.052
Sex	.281	.221	.096
Block 2-full model			
Constant	9.741	.814	
Age	-.006	.012	-.038
Sex	.258	.223	.088
Years served on school board	-.016	.020	-.065
Highest level of education	.034	.080	.032

Note: Block 1:  $R^2 = .014$ , Block 2:  $R^2 = .003$

Note: \*  $p < .05$

### **Ranking of Iowa Standards for School Leaders**

Participants were asked to rank order the ISSL with the most important standard for a superintendent being assigned a “1” and the least important assigned a “6.” Table 4.13 provides the overall averages for that ranking. Based on mean scores, findings indicate that school board members rated standard five, ethics, as the most important of the ISSL, with a mean of 2.22. This was followed by standard one, shared vision ( $M = 2.84$ ), standard two, culture of learning ( $M = 2.99$ ), standard 3, management ( $M = 3.00$ ), standard four, family and community ( $M = 4.80$ ) and lastly, standard six, societal context ( $M = 5.10$ ).

Table 4.13

*Descriptive Statistics for ISSL Rankings by School Board Members*

	Median	Mode	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Standard 1—Shared Vision	3	2	2.84	1.43
Standard 2—Culture of Learning	3	3	2.99	1.27
Standard 3—Management	3	2	3.00	1.39
Standard 4—Family & Community	5	5	4.80	1.23
Standard 5—Ethics	2	1	2.22	1.45
Standard 6—Societal Context	6	6	5.10	1.26

Note: Scale: 1 = Most important standard, 6 = Least important standard

Table 4.14 displays the ranking for each standard based on the percentage of participants and how they ranked each standard. For example, 21.5% of participants ranked shared vision as the most important standard; whereas, 14.8% of participants ranked culture of learning as the most important standard.

Table 4.14

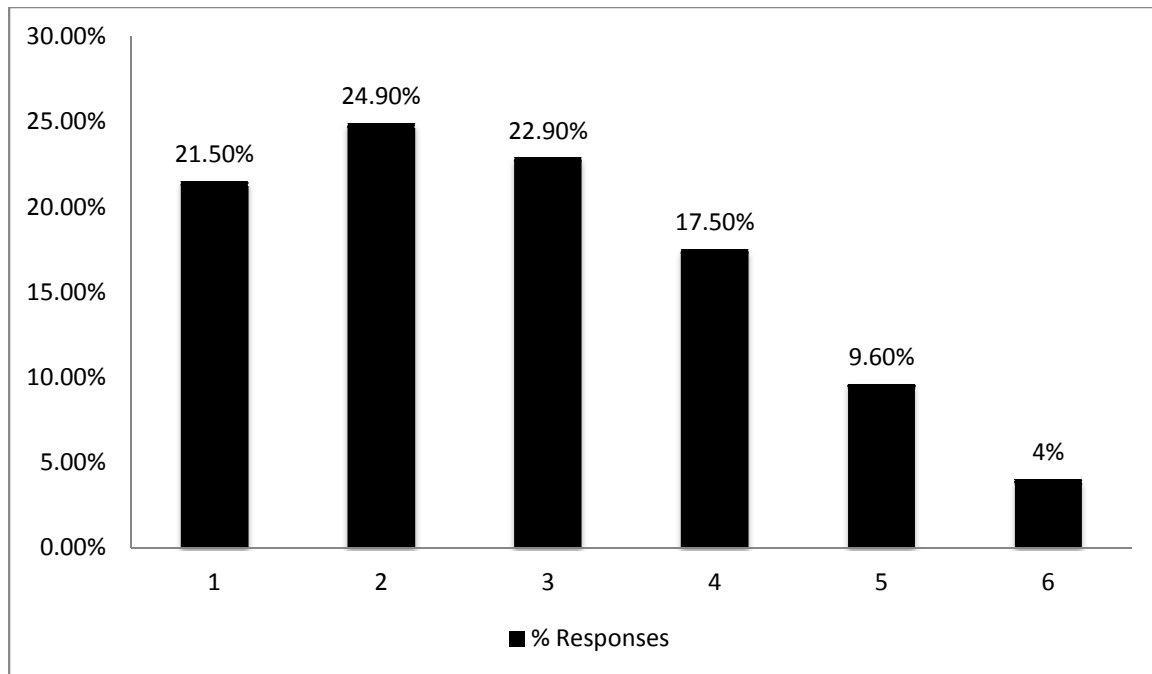
*Board Member Rankings of ISSL by Percentage*

	Ranking					
	1	2	3	4	5	6
Standard 1—Shared Vision	21.5%	24.9%	22.9%	17.5%	9.6%	4.0%
Standard 2—Culture of Learning	14.8%	19.9%	30.1%	23.9%	9.1%	2.3%
Standard 3—Management	15.3%	26.6%	20.3%	24.9%	7.3%	7.6%
Standard 4—Family & Community	1.7%	6.2%	7.3%	10.7%	43.5%	30.5%
Standard 5—Ethics	46.7%	17.8%	14.4%	12.2%	5.6%	3.3%
Standard 6—Societal Context	2.2%	5.5%	4.4%	11.0%	23.8%	53.0%

Note: Scale: 1 = Most important standard, 6 = Least important standard

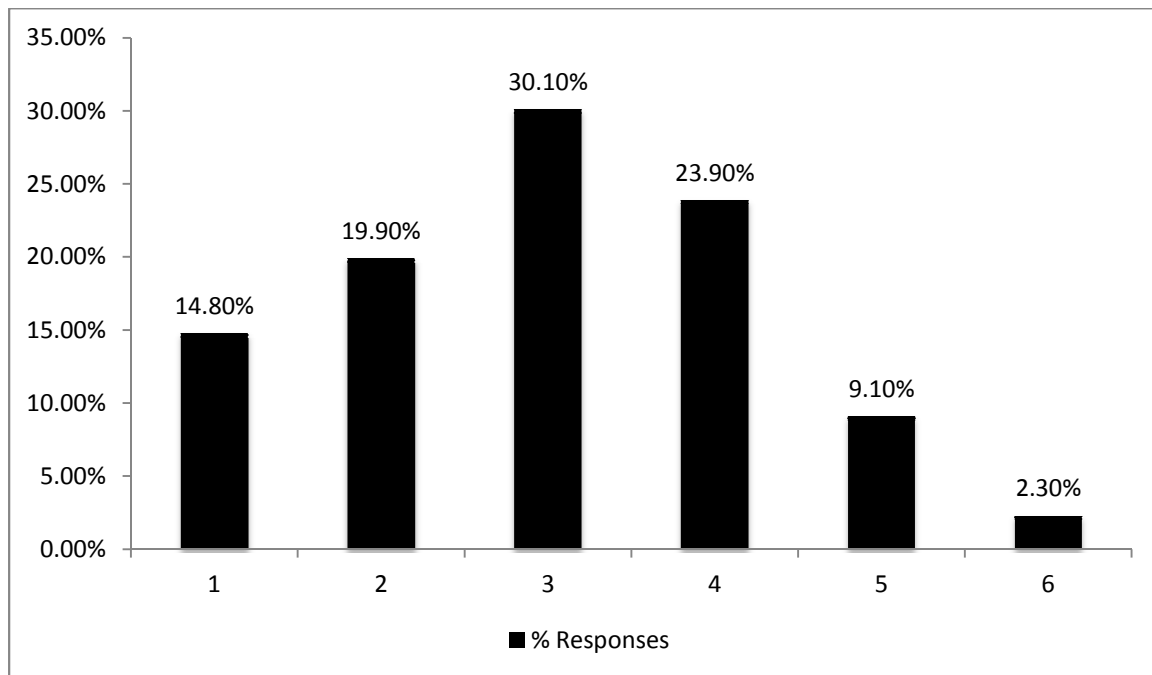
The following six graphs provide visual displays of participants' rankings of the six standards.





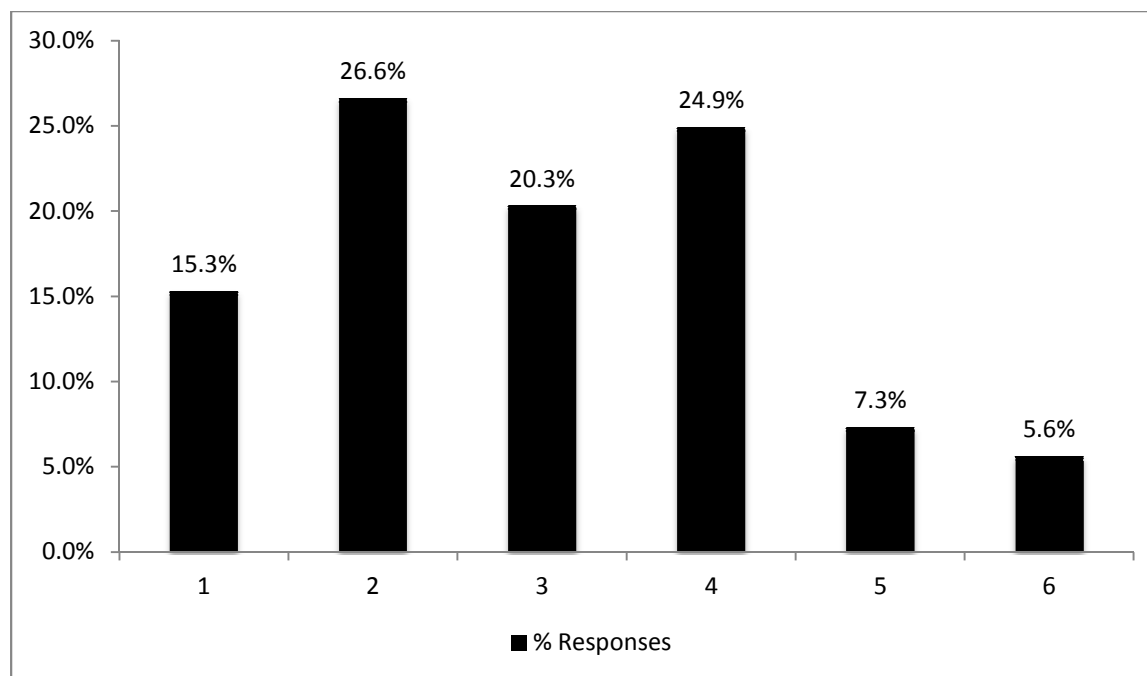
Note: Scale: 1 = Most important standard, 6 = Least important standard

*Figure 4.1. Shared Vision Rankings*



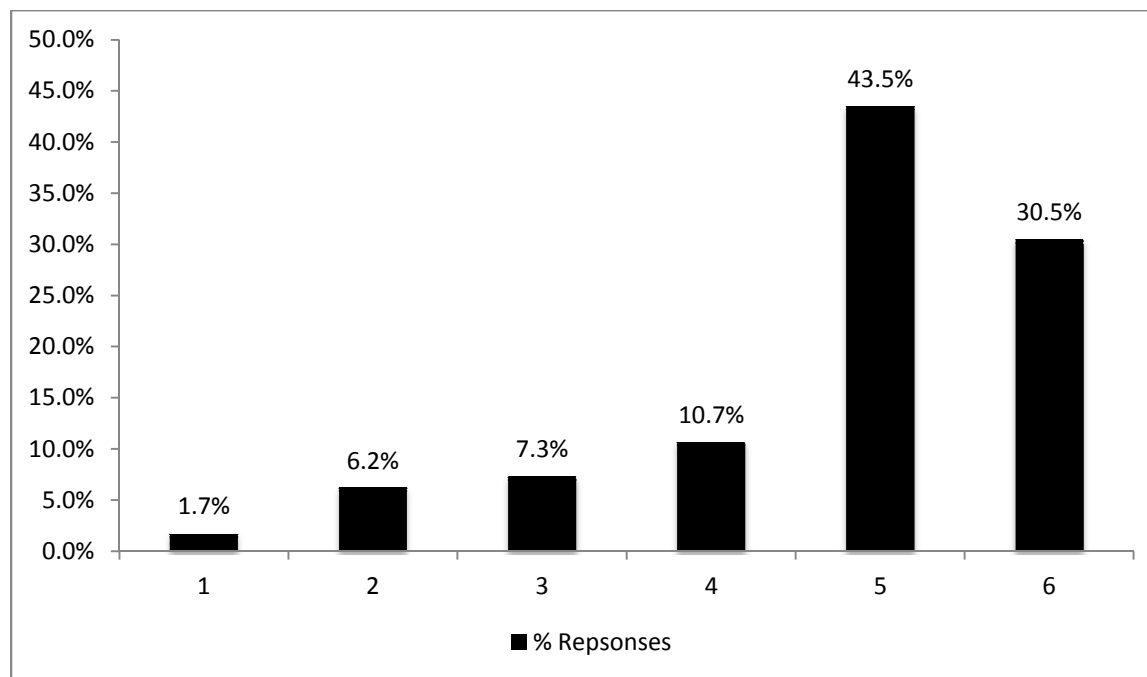
Note: Scale: 1 = Most important standard, 6 = Least important standard

*Figure 4.2. Culture of Learning Rankings*



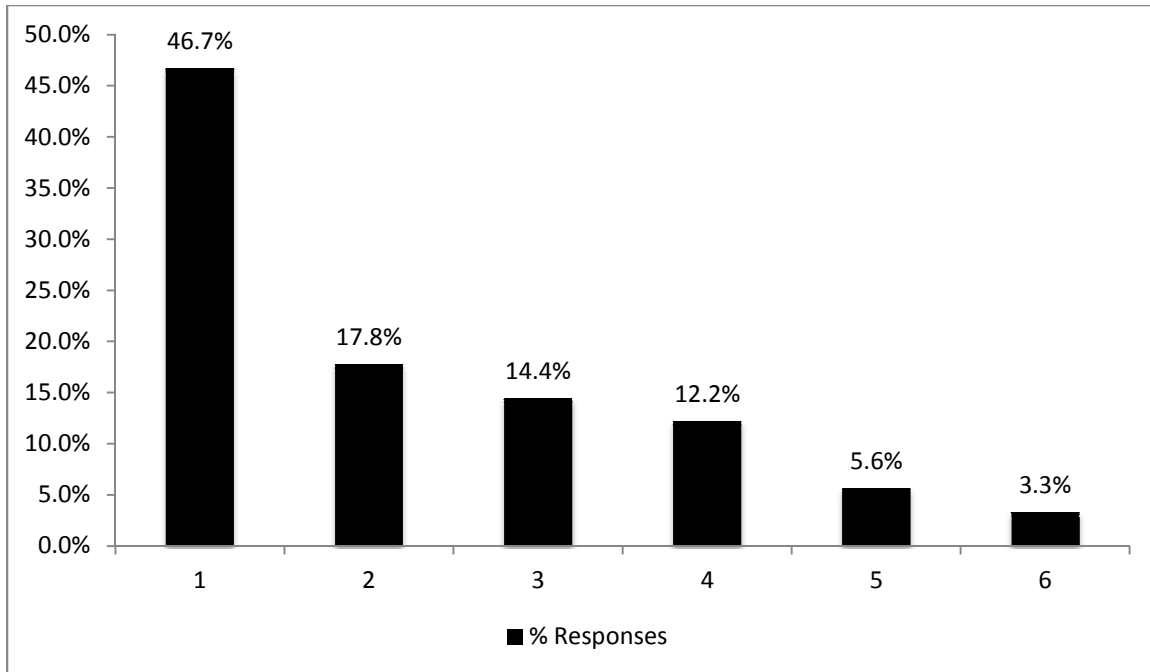
Note: Scale: 1 = Most important standard, 6 = Least important standard

*Figure 4.3. Management Rankings*



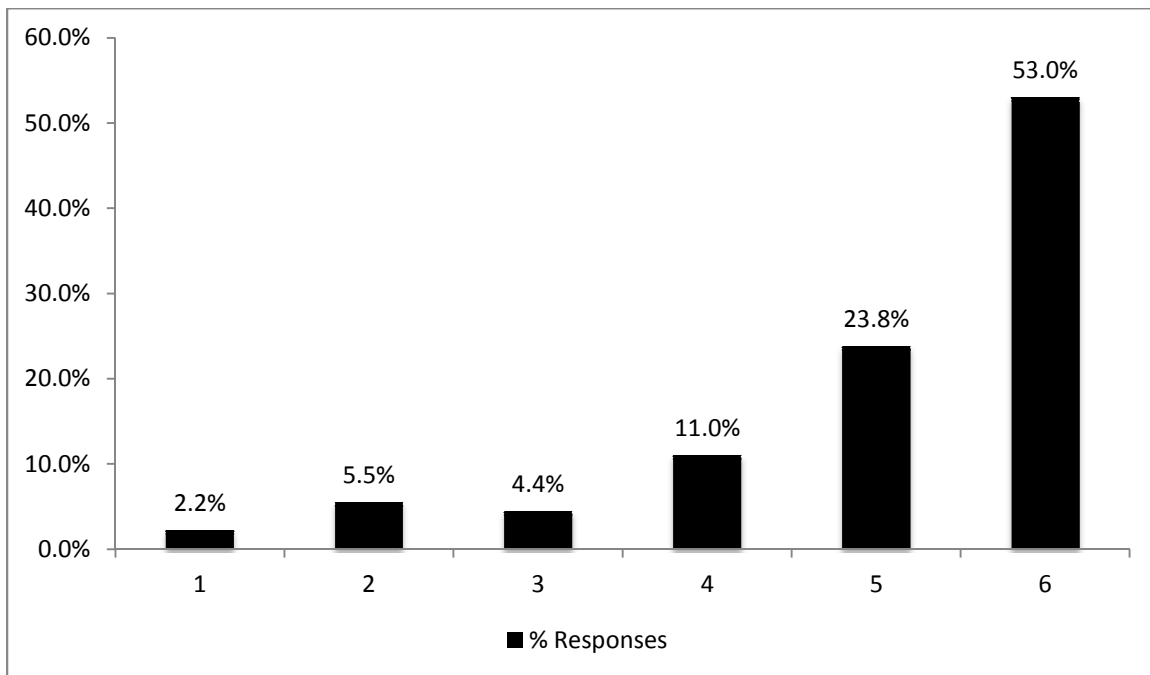
Note: Scale: 1 = Most important standard, 6 = Least important standard

*Figure 4.4. Family and Community Rankings*



Note: Scale: 1 = Most important standard, 6 = Least important standard

*Figure 4.5. Ethics Rankings*



Note: Scale: 1 = Most important standard, 6 = Least important standard

*Figure 4.6. Societal Context Rankings*

### **Satisfaction with Superintendent Performance**

Participants in the study were asked “How satisfied are you with the performance of your current superintendent?” Responses ranged from 1 to 4, with 1 = “very dissatisfied,” 2 = “dissatisfied,” 3 = “satisfied,” and 4 = “very satisfied.” Based on the results of this question most school board members appear to be happy with the performance of their current superintendent, with 81.3% stating that they were “satisfied” or “very satisfied.” Table 4.15 displays the results of this question.

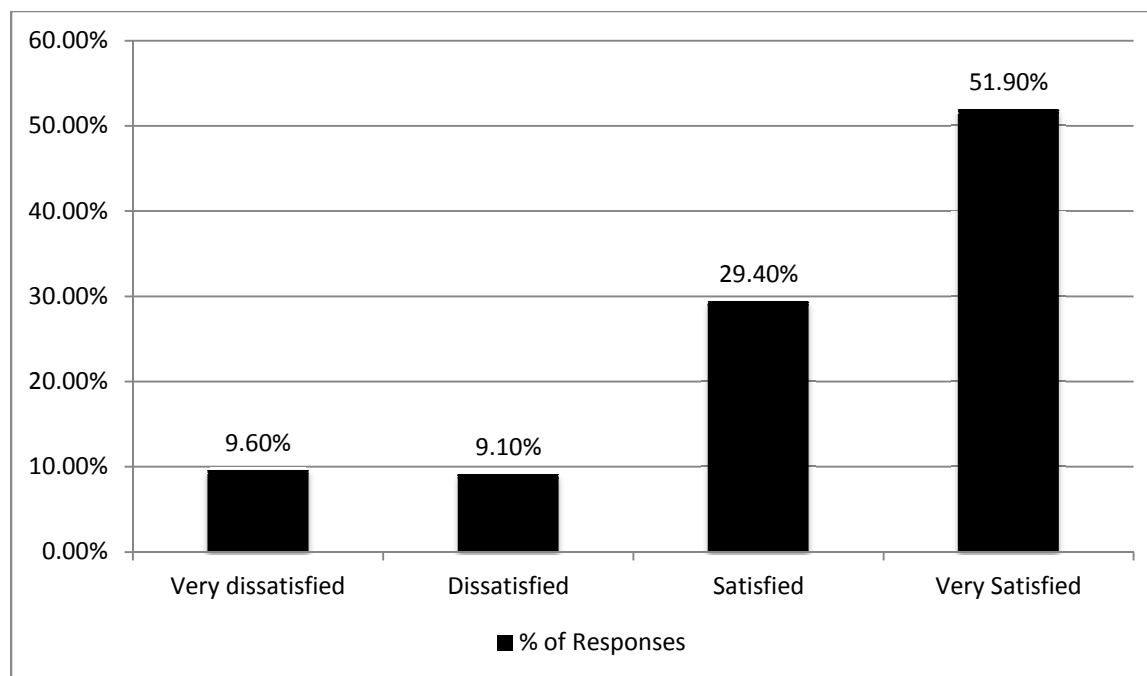
Table 4.15

*Descriptive Statistics for School Board Member Satisfaction of Superintendent (n = 187)*

Variables	N	Percentage
Very dissatisfied	18	9.6%
Dissatisfied	17	9.1%
Satisfied	55	29.4%
Very satisfied	97	51.9%

<sup>a</sup>Scale: 1 = Very dissatisfied, 2 = Dissatisfied, 3 = Satisfied, 4 = Very satisfied

Figure 4.7 provides a graphic representation of board members’ level of satisfaction with their superintendents.



*Figure 4.7. Board Members' Level of Satisfaction with their Current Superintendent*

### **Qualitative Responses**

Participants for this study were asked three questions for which they had to provide answers. The questions were: 1) what are the three most important attributes of a superintendent? 2) what do you think are the three most important responsibilities for a superintendent in your district? and 3) what are the top three expectations you have for your superintendent? In order to analyze the data provided the researcher used a simple coding system in order to identify themes that emerged from the responses (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007).

#### **Three Most Important Attributes of a Superintendent**

The three top responses to this question were around the ideas of integrity, leadership, and effective communication.

Participants overwhelmingly expressed the need to have a superintendent who possessed honesty and integrity, and acts in an ethical manner. There were comments such as “ethical,”

“trustworthy,” and “honest.” One participant stated that it wasn’t enough to just possess integrity, but that they need to “maintain extremely high personal integrity.”

Participants also want their superintendent to be a leader. “Leadership,” “leads by example,” and “a manager/developer of administration, faculty, and staff” were common refrains from school board members.

Finally, it was important to participants that superintendents are able to communicate effectively with various constituent groups. Comments such as “approachable by board members, staff, and shareholders,” strong communication skills,” and “open door policy” were common responses to the question. One participant was more detailed and included a couple of themes in stating, “maintaining a high level of visibility and accessibility while displaying irreproachable ethics, fairness and integrity as a role model for students, staff, families, and community.”

There were two other attributes that were mentioned often, although not nearly to the level of the three previously described. These included the idea of having skills related to school finance and being well-informed of educational and district issues.

### **Three Most Important Responsibilities for a Superintendent**

The second question asking the most important responsibilities of a superintendent offered similar results to the attributes participants looked for, with one slight exception. Board members reported that they feel it is important for superintendents to lead their district and the people who work there. “Lead administrative staff and teaching staff” and “give direction to the administrative team in the educational leadership of the district” are good examples of comments made by participants in the area of leadership.

School board members also felt that a key responsibility of a superintendent is to communicate effectively with multiple stakeholder groups. They expressed the importance of “being available and open to the public” and to “communicate effectively.” One board member felt that it was imperative that the superintendent “be available to explain what the school is trying to do.”

One slight change from the results of the first question was that the management of the school district budget moved into the top three responses. Participants want their superintendent to “maintain district financial stability” and to assure the “proper administration of the budget.”

### **Top Three Expectations of the Superintendent**

This question resulted in findings that were consistent with the first. School board members expect their superintendent to act with integrity, lead by example, and communicate.

In the area of integrity, board members stated that it was important to “maintain a high level of professionalism” and to be “trustworthy and honest in all decisions.” The words “integrity” and “honest” were mentioned as expectations many times by participants.

Another theme that emerged from this question was leadership. “Leading and mentoring other administrators and leadership on our staff” offers a good example of the responses from board members. Another board member felt it important that the superintendent provide “leadership in carrying out the objective set for the district, keeping everyone focused.”

Communication is a third key expectation that board members have for their superintendent. School board members want for their superintendent to be “approachable by all” and to “maintain communication between board, teachers, and principals.” One participant in particular felt that it is important that the communication be maintained even when the news is

not good. They stated that they their superintendent to “maintain close communication with the board, communicating both the good and the bad.”

Like with the first question, supervision over school district finances was mentioned often. Although this was not one of the top three themes, it is important to a number of participants. Board members want a superintendent to be “a good steward of the taxpayers’ dollars.”

### **Summary Answers to Research Questions**

Each of the research questions is answered in this section, using results from the data analyses presented in this chapter.

#### **Research Question 1—Demographic Make-Up of Board Members**

*What is the demographic make-up of school board members in the state of Iowa?*

The sample consisted of 187 active Iowa school board members. The Iowa Association of School Boards (2013) reports that there are a total of roughly 1,970 K-12 public school board members in Iowa. Of those who participated in this study, 105, or 56% were male, with 81 (43%) being female (one participant did not identify their sex). The average age was 53.17 ( $SD = 9.82$ ) years, and the average time spent on the school board was just shy of seven years ( $M = 6.995$ ,  $SD = 5.80$ ). The average enrollment of the school district in which the participants served is 1786 ( $SD = 2126.62$ ). However, there was a broad range reported, with a minimum of 49 and a maximum of 16,500. This made the median (1200 students) considerably lower than the mean. The highest level of education ranged from completing a GED program to having a terminal degree. On average, the education score computed to a mean of 4.82 ( $SD = 1.45$ ). To offer perspective, a score of “4” indicated a two-year degree, and a score of “5” indicated a four-year degree. Both the median and modes for education level were reported as “5.”



**Research Question 2—The Relationship Between Board Members’ Age, Length of Service, and District Enrollment and the Importance placed on the ISSL**

*What is the relationship between school board members’ age, length of service on the board, and student enrollment of the district they serve, and the level of importance placed on the six Iowa Standards for School Leaders?*

The results indicate that the correlations between the independent variables of age, length of service on the school board, and district enrollment and the six dependent variables were not statistically significant. However, the results do indicate that when correlations were run between dependent variables and each of the other dependent variables, all were statistically significant, and were equal to or greater than  $r = .52$ . In general, this indicates that the level of importance on one standard is similar to the level of importance placed on each of the other standards.

**Research Question 3—The Relationship Between Board Members’ Sex and Highest Level of Education Acquired, and the Importance placed on the ISSL**

*Is there a statistically significant difference between school board members’ sex and highest level of education acquired and the level of importance placed on the six Iowa Standards for School Leaders?*

In order to answer the third research question an independent sample *t*-test was conducted to determine if there is a relationship between a board members’ sex and the level of importance they place on each of the ISSL. Results indicated that there was a statistically significant difference with the four of the six standards. These results suggest that female board members are more likely to assign a higher ranking in importance to shared vision, culture of learning, management, and ethics, than male board members.

In order to determine the relationship between the highest level of education that participants had acquired, and the importance they placed on each of the ISSL, an ANOVA was conducted. The results of the ANOVA indicate a statistically significant difference between participants with “some college,” as compared with those in the other educational groups of “high school diploma/GED,” “college degree,” or “graduate degree,” and the level of importance they place on the first ISSL, shared vision. School board members with “some college” ranked shared vision significantly lower in importance than did the members with a high school diploma or GED, a college degree, or a graduate degree.

#### **Research Question 4—Can Importance Placed on ISSL be Predicted Based on Characteristics**

*To what extent does a school board members’ age, sex, length of service on the board, and level of education acquired, predict the level of importance placed on Standard [1-6] of the ISSL construct, [shared vision, culture of learning, management, family and community, ethics, societal context?*

Results of the hierarchical regression analysis revealed only two models where independent variable(s) were statistically significant predictors. Specifically, the independent variable of sex was a statistically significant predictor for the importance placed on shared vision. Additionally, the independent variable of age was a positive predictor for importance placed on the construct of family and community and years of service was a negative predictor for the importance placed on family and community.

#### **Research Question 5—ISSL Rankings**

*How do school board members rank the ISSL standards relative to the most important characteristics for their district’s superintendent?*

Participants were asked to rank the ISSL according to importance, with “1” being the most important and “6” being least important. Results indicate that the most important standard for the participants was the standard of ethics ( $M = 2.22$ ,  $SD = 1.45$ , Mode = 1, Median = 2). The second most important standard was the standard of shared vision ( $M = 2.84$ ,  $SD = 1.43$ ). The next four standards, in order, were: culture of learning ( $M = 2.99$ ,  $SD = 1.27$ , management ( $M = 3.00$ ,  $SD = 1.39$ ), family and community ( $M = 4.80$ ,  $SD = 1.23$ ), and societal context ( $M = 5.10$ ,  $SD = 1.26$ ).

### **Research Questions 6—Most Important Attributes**

*What do school board members identify as the most important attributes of a superintendent?*

The top three categories of responses to this question, in order, were ethics and integrity, leadership, and communication. Phrases such as “someone who is honest,” “acts with integrity,” and “is an effective role-model and image for the district” were common. These all related to the ethics category, and align with the fifth ISSL. This finding supports the results of the fourth research question. Other common refrains included “lead by example,” “provide leadership for staff and administration,” “be a leader for the district,” “effectively communicate with all stakeholders,” “communicate with the board,” and “is able to clearly communicate issues.”

Although definitely trailing in the number of responses given to the first three categories, there were three others that were given considerable attention. These included financial skills, being well-informed/knowledgeable, and being someone who is approachable and personable.

### **Research Question 7—Most Important Responsibilities**

*What do school board members identify as the most important responsibilities for their district superintendent?*

The results of this question were very closely aligned to the results of research question six. Again, ethics/integrity, leadership and communication were the most cited responsibilities, with phrases being consistent with those from research question six.

### **Research Question 8—Top Expectations for Superintendents**

*What do school board members identify as their top three expectations for their district superintendent?*

Like research question seven, this one also aligned with the results of question six. School board members expect their superintendent to be honest and forthright. They expect that they communicate with the board and the community as a whole, and they want them to be leaders of the district.

### **Summary**

This chapter provided results for the data analysis methods described in chapter 3. Descriptive statistics as well as inferential analyses (i.e. correlations, independent samples t-tests, one-way ANOVAs, and hierarchical regressions) were conducted to identify the impact independent variables had on each of the six dependent variables listed as the ISSL standards. Furthermore, responses from three open-ended questions were analyzed to determine important attributes and responsibilities for superintendents as well as expectations board members have for their district superintendents. Chapter 5 provides a discussion of the results, implications for practice, and recommendations for future research.

## **CHAPTER 5**

### **DISCUSSION, CONCLUSIONS, AND IMPLICATIONS**

This chapter provides a discussion of the results presented in chapter 4. This chapter begins with a summary of the study followed by a discussion of the results, and implications for practice and future research.

#### **Summary of the Study**

Chapter 1 provided an overview of superintendent tenure in school districts, and the role that the relationship between the superintendent and the school board plays. Information was provided on the purpose of the study and research questions, including a discussion of Kristof's (1996) person-organization fit theory, which served as the theoretical framework for the investigation. Chapter 1 concluded with the significance of the study and definitions of key terms and acronyms.

Chapter 2 included a review of the literature associated with school boards, including their history, composition, and roles and responsibilities. There was also a review of literature on superintendents; particularly their relationship with school boards, the expectations that school boards have for them, and their tenure. A review of the development of the Iowa Standards for School Leaders was provided. Finally, this chapter provided a review of person-organization fit, which served as a theoretical framework for this study.

Included in chapter 3 was a review of the methodology used in the study. This included the research design, methodological approach, research questions, the sample and participants in the study and the survey instrument used. It also discussed the data collection process. Both the independent and dependent variables were described and the data analysis and procedures were outlined. The chapter concluded with identification of the delimitations and limitations of this

study.

Chapter 4 provided the results of the analyzed data, including the data screening process and the establishment of assumptions of normality. Provided were frequencies and descriptive statistics, the results of correlations, *t*-tests, and ANOVAs. Hierarchical regression analyses were also presented. The results of the three qualitative questions were shared, as were a ranking of the ISSL and the results of board members' level of satisfaction with their superintendents. The chapter concluded with answers to each of the eight research questions that were part of this study.

What follows in this chapter is a discussion of the results of the study. This will be followed by a conclusion, the implications for practice, and recommendations for further research. The chapter will conclude with some final thoughts.

### **Discussion of the Results**

The relationship between school board members and their superintendents is important in order to meet the needs of the school district (Fusarelli, 2006; Glass & Franceschini, 2007; Land, 2002). This relationship is a key component to the "fit" Kristoff (1996) describes when speaking of the compatibility between people and the organization with which they are associated. Proper fit relates to higher levels of job satisfaction, commitment to the organization, and task performance (Ostroff, Shin, & Kinicki, 2005; Schneider, 2001; Silverthorne, 2004). Making available the expectations that school board members have for their superintendents is an important part of ensuring the right fit and the proper relationship.

The goal of this study was to examine the expectations school board members have for superintendents as related to the ISSL. The results revealed that certain demographic characteristics predicted the emphasis that board members placed on certain leadership

standards. The results also indicate how school board members rank the importance of each of the ISSL and what they believe to be the top three attributes, responsibilities, and expectations they have for their superintendents. Each of the independent variables is addressed in the sections below, followed by findings from the qualitative responses.

### **Age**

In an NSBA survey conducted in 2011 on school board members nationwide, it was found that 60% of board members were between the ages of 40 and 59. This is consistent with the average ( $M = 53.17$ ,  $SD = 9.82$ ) age of school board members who participated in this study. Slightly different from the national survey, however, was the percent of board members who were 60 years old and above. NSBA reported that 34% of their respondents were in that age category, while just under 24% of the participants who recorded an age in this study identified themselves as being at least 60 years old.

The result of correlations run between the independent variables and each of the six ISSL found that there was not a statistically significant relationship between age and the level of importance placed on the ISSL. However, the results of the hierarchical regression analysis did show that age was a positive predictor for the importance placed on the construct of family and community. That is, the older the board member the more likely they are to place a greater level of importance on that particular standard, which includes criteria such as engaging families by promoting shared responsibilities, promoting a structure for family and community involvement, facilitating the connections of students and families to health and social services, and establishing a culture that welcomes and honors families and seeks ways to engage them in student learning.

Given that it is unlikely a potential superintendent candidate would know the age of the board members, this finding is likely one of awareness only. In addition, even if the ages were known, it was not within the scope of this study to determine at what age the relationship began to occur.

## **Sex**

In order to determine whether or not there was a relationship between school board members' sex and the importance placed on the six ISSL, independent samples *t*-tests were run. Results of this indicated that there was a statistically significant difference in the first standard, shared vision. Female board members were more likely to rank this standard higher than their male counterparts. This standard includes criteria such as using best practice to improve educational programs, articulating and promoting high expectations for teaching and learning, and provide leadership for major initiatives.

This finding is consistent with that of Ortiz and Marshall (1988) and Underwood, Alvey, and Fortune (1987) when they found that female board members pay more attention to the educational components of school than male board members. Tallerico (1992) too found that female board members are more interested than male board members in issues like curriculum and programs.

This offers some practical guidance to those superintendents new to a district, or considering a move to a district. Understanding that a board made up of a majority of women may place greater emphasis on the shared vision standard can help a superintendent know where to place their efforts. It might also provide the potential candidates with an opportunity to evaluate their strengths and determine whether or not that may be a good fit for them.

## **Highest Level of Education**



ANOVAs were run to determine whether or not a relationship existed between a school board member's level of education and the importance placed on each of the ISSL. The results indicate that there is a statistically significant relationship between school board members with "some college" and how they ranked the standard "shared vision." The board members with some college ranked shared vision significantly lower in importance than did members with a high school diploma or GED, or a college degree.

The value of this finding may or may not be of practical value. For one reason, it may be difficult for a superintendent candidate or new hire to know exactly the level of education of each board member. Conversely, if they do know, the superintendent candidate or appointee may want to focus their efforts more on other standards.

Participants in this study reported a mean educational level of 4.82 ( $SD = 1.45$ ), with a "4" being a two-year degree and a "5" being a four-year degree. The median and modes were both reported as 5. The NSBA (2011) determined that over 74% of school board members nationally having at least a bachelor's degree. In this study, 69.8% of the participants who identified their highest level of education have at least a bachelor's degree.

### **Years of Service on the Board**

Over 50% of the school board members have served for more than five years in their current district (NSBA, 2011). In Iowa as a whole, 60% have done so for less than five years (IASB, 2012). In this study, the average time spent on the school board was just under seven years ( $M = 6.995$ ,  $SD = 5.80$ )

The result of correlations run between the independent variables and each of the six ISSL found that there was not a statistically significant relationship between years of service on the school board and the level of importance placed on the ISSL. However, the results of the

hierarchical regression analysis did show that the independent variable of years of service on the board was a negative predictor for the importance placed on the construct of family and community.

Practically speaking, board members with more experience tend to rank the standard related to family and community lower than those with less experience. It is possible that those experienced board members feel that there are more pressing needs. It might also be possible that they have seen that attempts to collaborate with the families and community as a whole are not as fruitful as they might have liked. This standard appears to be further away from the traditional “work” of schools, which may have a factor, as well.

### **District Enrollment**

There were no statistically significant findings to support that a relationship exists between the independent variable district enrollment, and the level of importance that school board members place on each of the ISSL.

### **ISSL Rankings**

School board members were asked to rank the ISSL in order of importance. The results indicate that the standard of ethics was the most important, followed by shared vision, culture of learning, management, family and community, and societal context. These rankings provide all superintendents with valuable information. It makes it clear that school board members expect, first and foremost, that their superintendent act with integrity, is honest and respectful of others, and demonstrates ethic and professional behavior. These findings would be consistent with those of Cataldo (2011) and Glenn (2008), where they found that possessing sound character and ethics were key factors that influenced a superintendent’s relationship with their school board.

As Storey and Beeman (2009) state, school district leaders must operate from a moral imperative.

### **Most Important Attributes, Responsibilities, and Top Expectations for Superintendents**

School board members were asked to identify the top three attributes of a superintendent, as well as the top three responsibilities and what their top three expectations for their superintendent would be. The findings from these questions were very consistent with the ISSL rankings.

School board members feel that the most important attribute for a superintendent is to possess integrity and act in an ethical fashion. Comments made by board members included common refrains such as “acts with integrity” and they want “someone who is honest.” The other two attributes that stood out were leadership skills and the ability to communicate—especially with the school board. As Storey and Beeman (2009) stated, “Leaders must operate from moral authority based on ability, professional expertise and moral imperative rather than line authority” (p. 763). All superintendents’ actions and behaviors are the result of moral choices (Storey & Beeman, 2009), and school board members expect those actions to be of the highest integrity.

When identifying responsibilities of superintendents the responses were very much the same as they were when asked about attributes. In fact, ethics/integrity were the most often cited responsibility, followed by leadership and communication. When asked about the top three expectations the board members had for superintendents, the answers were again, ethical behavior, leadership, and communication with stakeholders.

What many might find surprising is the absence in the top three attributes, responsibilities, and expectations of things like financial skills and management. Although mentioned often, these trailed the top three considerably in the number of times they were

mentioned. Many people assume that the primary role of the superintendent is to manage the budget of a school district. This is certainly an important element, but in the eyes of the participants in this study, it was not among the top three functions. Perhaps this is due to the knowledge the board members possess about school operations, coming to understand that there are some things that rise above simple financial responsibilities. A school district can be in a very sound financial position, but if the superintendent is irresponsible, dishonest, lacks leadership skills, and fails to communicate, the financial position becomes irrelevant in the eyes of school board members. Yock, Keough, Underwood, and Fortune (1990) confirm that financial and management skills are not the things that are most likely to get superintendents into trouble. They determined that the top two reasons why superintendents get terminated by school boards are because of a loss of confidence in the superintendent's integrity and a loss of confidence in the superintendent's ability to lead. Management is not unimportant, but it must be accompanied by a focus on instruction and learning (Darish & Aplin, 2001).

The results of this study speak to the conversation related to leadership versus management. Based on these findings it appears that school board members want leaders who manage, rather than managers who lead.

### **Implications**

Based on the results of this study, the following are implications for practice and recommendations for future study.

#### **Implications for Practice**

Implications for practice can apply to both individuals and organizations. The individuals who stand to benefit are superintendents, and aspiring superintendents. Organizations include school boards, state and national organizations that serve administrators and school boards, and

finally, higher education institutes that offer preparatory programs for individuals seeking licensure in the superintendency.

**Implications for superintendents, and aspiring superintendents.** Based on the findings of this study, it is highly recommended that superintendents understand that school boards want their superintendent to be a person of integrity in all that they say and do. It is also important to know that communication is a key to success. This is especially true as it pertains to the superintendent communicating with their school board, but also with the district as a whole.

Knowing that the expectations school board members have for their superintendents vary is a key element. And although predicting expectations based on characteristics can be difficult, this study informs us that female board members tend to favor the elements that make up the shared vision standard more than their male counterparts.

**Implications for school boards.** The findings of this study can also offer some guidance for school boards. Results of this study indicate that when selecting candidates, it is important to seek someone who fits the needs of the district and the expectations of the board. This means that the board needs to take time to determine what their expectations for a new superintendent are, prior to evaluating candidates for the position. In addition, they need to make clear their expectations with those who they select to interview.

Once in place, it is possible that the expectations of the board change, particularly if there is a change in the school board membership. Just as with a new superintendent, the restructured school board needs to make clear that the expectations may be different from the previous board. Doing so, with new or an experienced superintendent, will greatly improve the likelihood that those expectations will be met.

**Implications for organizations that serve administrators and school boards.** As for the organizations such as SAI, AASA, IASB, and NSBA that serve superintendents and school board members, these findings can provide them with valuable information.

SAI and AASA should provide information to those they serve that aligns with this study, making sure that members of their organizations understand the importance of ethics and communication. Organizations that provide support to administrators should provide professional development opportunities to administrators that include elements of this study.

Organizations that serve school boards, such as IASB and NSBA, should design programs and training that help school boards find ways to assess their expectations for superintendents. IASB and NSBA should provide training that would inform school board members of the importance of sharing their expectations with their superintendent. This sharing could come during the interview process or once a superintendent is in place.

**Implications for preparatory institutions.** Colleges and universities that offer preparatory programs for superintendent candidates can also benefit from these findings. Making it clear to individuals in these programs what school boards expect of their superintendents would be an important first step. These institutions should design learning that reinforces the importance of communication with the board and stakeholders. These should be set up in such a way that superintendent candidates become exposed to a variety of forms designed to reach a broad audience. Finally, provide experiences that help candidates to know how they can determine school board expectations during the interview process.

### **Recommendations for Future Research**

This study used the ISSL as the expectations school board members have for their superintendents. There could certainly be other constructs from which to define expectations that could provide valuable information, and may perhaps add value to the study outside of Iowa.

Additional research should be conducted to determine if the expectations superintendents have for themselves align with those of the school board members. Similar (although not identical) demographic variables could be used, and the survey would have to be changed very little in order to collect the data. A study of this nature would add valuable information to what has already been researched in this study.

Given the larger number of female superintendents a similar study, which evaluates the expectations school board members have based upon the sex of the superintendent, would also provide good information. For the females entering the position, this information could be even more relevant.

### **Conclusion**

This study sought to provide information that would help superintendents, state associations, and superintendent preparatory programs better understand the expectations that school board members have for superintendents, thus increasing the likelihood that there would be a good match between the individual and the school district, and therefore increase superintendent effectiveness and tenure. Using Kristoff's (1996) P-O fit theory as a framework, the study sought to enhance the possibility that proper matches, or "fit," could be made between superintendent (the "person") and school board (the "organization").

A survey instrument was developed using the ISSL as the basis for the expectations. Board members were asked to rate the importance of each standard's criteria. In addition, they were asked to rank order each of the six standards, and then were asked to identify the top three

attributes, responsibilities, and expectations for superintendents. The results from the survey were described in the previous section, and those results guide the implications for policy and practice in the following section.

### **Final Thoughts**

School boards are made up of a very diverse group of people, each with a different perspective as to how schools, and their superintendents, ought to operate. Making available research that helps both groups understand how to better work together will serve school district, and their students, well. This study provides information that can enhance the relationship between superintendents and their school boards, thus increasing the likelihood of a successful experience for both.



*Appendix A***Iowa's Standards for School Leaders (ISSL) and Associated Criteria****Standard #1**

An educational leader promotes the success of all students by facilitating the development, articulation, implementation, and stewardship of a vision of learning that is shared and supported by the school community. (Shared Vision)

The administrator:

- a. In collaboration with others, uses appropriate data to establish rigorous, concrete goals in the context of student achievement and instructional programs.
- b. Uses research and/or best practices in improving the educational program.
- c. Articulates and promotes high expectations for teaching and learning.
- d. Aligns and implements the educational programs, plans, actions, and resources with the district's vision and goals.
- e. Provides leadership for major initiatives and change efforts.
- f. Communicates effectively to various stakeholders regarding progress with school improvement plan goals.

**Standard #2**

An educational leader promotes the success of all students by advocating, nurturing and sustaining a school culture and instructional program conducive to student learning and staff professional development. (Culture of Learning)

The administrator:

- a. Provides leadership for assessing, developing and improving climate and culture.
- b. Systematically and fairly recognizes and celebrates accomplishments of staff and

students.

- c. Provides leadership, encouragement, opportunities and structure for staff to continually design more effective teaching and learning experiences for all students.
- d. Monitors and evaluates the effectiveness of curriculum, instruction and assessment.
- e. Evaluates staff and provides ongoing coaching for improvement.
- f. Ensures staff members have professional development that directly enhances their performance and improves student learning.
- g. Uses current research and theory about effective schools and leadership to develop and revise his/her professional growth plan.
- h. Promotes collaboration with all stakeholders.
- i. Is easily accessible and approachable to all stakeholders.
- j. Is highly visible and engaged in the school community.
- k. Articulates the desired school culture and shows evidence about how it is reinforced.

### **Standard #3**

An educational leader promotes the success of all students by ensuring management of the organization, operations and resources for a safe, efficient and effective learning environment. (Management)

The administrator:

- a. Complies with state and federal mandates and local board policies.
- b. Recruits, selects, inducts, and retains staff to support quality instruction.
- c. Addresses current and potential issues in a timely manner.
- d. Manages fiscal and physical resources responsibly, efficiently, and effectively.
- e. Protects instructional time by designing and managing operational procedures to

maximize learning.

f. Communicates effectively with both internal and external audiences about the operations of the school.

#### **Standard #4**

An educational leader promotes the success of all students by collaborating with families and community members, responding to diverse community interests and needs and mobilizing community resources. (Family and Community)

The administrator:

- a. Engages family and community by promoting shared responsibility for student learning and support of the education system.
- b. Promotes and supports a structure for family and community involvement in the education system.
- c. Facilitates the connections of students and families to the health and social services that support a focus on learning.
- d. Collaboratively establishes a culture that welcomes and honors families and community and seeks ways to engage them in student learning.

#### **Standard #5**

An educational leader promotes the success of all students by acting with integrity, fairness and in an ethical manner. (Ethics)

The administrator:

- a. Demonstrates ethical and professional behavior.
- b. Demonstrates values, beliefs, and attitudes that inspire others to higher levels of performance.

- c. Fosters and maintains caring professional relationships with staff.
- d. Demonstrates appreciation for and sensitivity to diversity in the school community.
- e. Is respectful of divergent opinions.

**Standard #6**

An educational leader promotes the success of all students by understanding the profile of the community and, responding to, and influencing the larger political, social, economic, legal and cultural context. (Societal Context)

The administrator:

- a. Collaborates with service providers and other decision-makers to improve teaching and learning.
- b. Advocates for the welfare of all members of the learning community.
- c. Designs and implements appropriate strategies to reach desired goals.

*Appendix B***Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium's (ISLLC) Standards****Standard 1**

A school administrator is an educational leader who promotes the success of all students by facilitating the development, articulation, implementation, and stewardship of a vision of learning that is shared and supported by the school community.

**Standard 2**

A school administrator is an educational leader who promotes the success of all students by advocating, nurturing, and sustaining a school culture and instructional program conducive to student learning and staff professional growth.

**Standard 3**

A school administrator is an educational leader who promotes the success of all students by ensuring management of the organization, operations, and resources for a safe, efficient, and effective learning environment.

**Standard 4**

A school administrator is an educational leader who promotes the success of all students by collaborating with families and community members, responding to diverse community interests and needs, and mobilizing community resources.

**Standard 5**

A school administrator is an educational leader who promotes the success of all students by acting with integrity, fairness, and in an ethical manner.

**Standard 6**

A school administrator is an educational leader who promotes the success of all students by understanding, responding to, and influencing the larger political, social, economic, legal, and cultural context.

*Appendix C***Survey Instrument**

Q1 What is the highest level of education you have completed?

- ☐ Less than high school diploma (1)
- ☐ High school diploma or GED (2)
- ☐ Some college (3)
- ☐ 2-year college degree or equivalent (4)
- ☐ 4-year college degree (5)
- ☐ Masters degree (6)
- ☐ Doctoral degree (7)
- ☐ Professional degree (JD, MD) (8)

Q2 Age:

Q3 Gender

- ☐ Male (1)
- ☐ Female (2)

Q4 How many years have you served as a school board member in your current district?

Q5 What are the total number of years you have served as a K-12 public school board member in all districts combined?

Q6 What is the estimated student enrollment of the district you currently serve?

Q7 In which Area Education Agency (AEA) is your district located?

- ☐ Keystone AEA (1)
- ☐ AEA 267 (2)
- ☐ Northwest AEA (4)
- ☐ Prairie Lakes AEA (3)
- ☐ Greenhills AEA (5)
- ☐ Heartland AEA (6)
- ☐ Grant Wood AEA (7)
- ☐ Mississippi Bend AEA (8)
- ☐ Great Prairie AEA (9)





of staff and students. (5)								
f. provide leadership, encouragement, opportunities and structure for staff to continually design more effective teaching and learning experiences for all students. (6)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
g. monitor and evaluates the effectiveness of curriculum, instruction, and assessment. (7)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○



schools and leadership to develop and revise his/her professional growth plan. (5)								
m. use appropriate data to establish rigorous, concrete goals in the context of student achievement and instructional programs. (6)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
n. promote collaboration with all stakeholders (7)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○









goals. (6)								
ii.								
collaboratively								
establish a								
culture that								
welcomes and								
honors								
families and	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
community								
and seeks								
ways to								
engage them								
in student								
learning. (7)								

Q13 How many years has your current superintendent served in your district in the superintendent role?

Q14 How satisfied are you with the performance of your current superintendent?

- ☐ Very Dissatisfied (1)
- ☐ Dissatisfied (2)
- ☐ Satisfied (3)
- ☐ Very Satisfied (4)

Q15 In your opinion, what are the three most important attributes of a superintendent?

Q16 Describe what you think are the three most important responsibilities for a superintendent in your district.

Q17 As a school board member, what are the top three expectations you have for your superintendent?

Q18 Please rank the following statements in order of 1 thru 6. Select 1 for the statement you think is the most important characteristic for your district's superintendent, followed by a 2 for the next most important characteristic and so on until you have ranked all 6 statements.

\_\_\_\_\_ A superintendent should facilitate the development, articulation, implementation, and stewardship of a vision of learning that is shared and supported by the school community. (1)

\_\_\_\_\_ A superintendent should be an advocate for, nurture, and sustain a school culture and instructional program conducive to student learning and staff professional development. (2)

\_\_\_\_\_ A superintendent should ensure the management of the organization, operations and resources for a safe, efficient, and effective learning environment. (3)



\_\_\_\_\_ A superintendent should collaborate with families and community members, respond to diverse community interests and needs and mobilize community resources. (4)

\_\_\_\_\_ A superintendent should act with integrity, fairness, and in an ethical manner. (5)

\_\_\_\_\_ A superintendent should understand the profile of the community, and respond to and influence the larger political, social, economic, legal, and cultural context. (6)

*Appendix D***Template of Invitation to Participate in Survey**

Dear Iowa School Board Member,

My name is Ed Klamfoth, current Drake University doctoral candidate and superintendent of the Edgewood-Colesburg CSD. This email is to serve as an invitation for you to participate in a doctoral research dissertation study.

I am asking Iowa school board members to participate in a confidential online survey, which should take approximately 15 minutes to complete. My research involves the study of school board members' expectations for superintendents, as related to the Iowa Standards for School Leaders. Results of the survey will help to determine the extent to which varying compositions of school boards influence the emphasis placed on the Iowa Standards for School Leaders. Results have the potential to help school boards and superintendents achieve a more explicit understanding of what one expects from the other. Results may also serve to provide higher education institutions, the Iowa Association of School Boards, and School Administrators of Iowa with information that can help them in their missions in the training and professional development of school board members and superintendents which, in turn, will ultimately help Iowa school districts.

In the next two days you will receive another email that will include instructions and a link to the survey. Your participation would be greatly appreciated.

Respectfully,

Ed Klamfoth

*Appendix E***Template of Email with Survey Instructions and Link**

Dear Iowa School Board Member,

Recently you received an email from me, inviting you to participate in a confidential online survey that is part of my dissertation research at Drake University. This email contains information regarding informed consent and a link to the survey that you will find below. Your participation is greatly appreciated, and it should take you approximately 15 minutes to complete the survey. Should you choose to participate in the study there will likely be no direct benefit to you, although the information from this study may serve to benefit the relationships between school board members and their district superintendents due to the fact that the purpose of this study is to examine the expectations school board members have for superintendents as related to the Iowa Standards for School Leaders (ISSL). The study is significant in that results of the survey will help to determine the extent to which varying compositions of school boards influence the emphasis placed on the Iowa Standards for School Leaders. Results have the potential to help school boards and superintendents achieve a more explicit understanding of what one expects from the other. Results may also serve to provide higher education institutions, the Iowa Association of School Boards, and School Administrators of Iowa with information that can help them in their missions in the training and professional development of school board members and superintendents which, in turn, will ultimately help Iowa school districts.

Your participation is completely voluntary and there is no penalty for not participating. You may choose to skip any questions in the survey that you would prefer not to answer. You may also choose to stop taking the survey at any time for any reason.

Data from this study will be confidential and all information will be stored in a password-protected computer with no personal identifiers linking your answers. Results of the study will be analyzed, written and published in aggregate form, with no individual names being used in any way. The results of the survey will be included in the dissertation document, which will be publicly available upon completion through the Drake University Cowles Library and may later be submitted for journal publication or conference presentations.

You are encouraged to ask questions at any time during this study. For further information about the study, contact me at: eklamfoth@edge-cole.k12.ia.us or 563-608-0264 or you may contact my dissertation advisor, Dr. Robyn Cooper at: robyn.cooper@drake.edu or 515-271-4535. If you have any questions about the rights of research participants, please contact the IRB Administrator (515-271-3472) or [IRB@Drake.edu](mailto:IRB@Drake.edu).

Clicking on the link below indicates your voluntary agreement to participate in the study.

The survey link is: xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx

Thank you very much.

Respectfully,

Ed Klamfoth

*Appendix F***Template of Email Reminder to Participate in the Survey**

Dear Iowa School Board Member,

I am sending you this email as a reminder of an online survey being conducted as part of my dissertation research through Drake University. Below is the original email with the survey link. I thank you for your consideration of participating in this research.

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